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"FORTUNES AND MISFORTUNES OF HARRY RACKETT SCAPEGRACE,"
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LORIMER LITTLEGOOD.

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN OUR HERO MAKES HIS BOW AND COMES INTO HIS PROPERTY.

“AND all the rest, residue, and remainder of my real and personal estate, whatsoever and wheresoever, I give, devise, and bequeath unto my dear son, Lorimer, his heirs, executors, and administrators, for ever.”

Such were the words which Mr. Bosher, attorney-at-law, read out with due solemnity in the little drawing room of Verbena Cottage, near the well-known town of Muddleford, in the county of Surrey. Mr. Bosher always threw extraordinary emphasis into the reading of a will, especially when the document had been drawn by himself. When he announced a large legacy, the words were very slowly and distinctly drawn out, and a little tremulousness of the voice at the same time thrown in, to impress you with the deep respect he entertained for the benevolence of the departed. A bequest to himself produced a slight huskiness, and the necessity of pulling out a very white and voluminous pocket handkerchief to be applied to the corners of his eyes. The cutting off of any scapegrace or offending relation with a shilling, was delivered with thrilling severity of tone. The provision for “my dear wife” brought forth a tenderness of utterance almost unprofessional; and the final

wind-up of all “the rest and residue,” came with a force and dignity of manner that nothing but long practice could have produced.

Mr. Bosher was a florid and stout gentleman with a bald head, which shone as brilliantly as if carefully polished every morning with a furniture brush. He was always dressed in black, and on important occasions like the present he wore a white neckcloth several inches high, and swathed round his neck in a manner that seemed to threaten suffocation. Such watch-seals and keys as dangled from Mr. Bosher’s fob are rarely seen in these degenerate days, which is to be lamented, seeing that they are wonderfully imposing.

In character, Mr. Bosher was unassailable. Everybody (that is, the everybody of Muddleford and its vicinity) knew him and trusted him. His private office was, from floor to roof, all round the four walls, crowded with japanned tin boxes holding clients’ papers and title deeds, and labelled “Jonathan Podgers, Esq.,” “The Pumpkin Estates,” “Tompkins’s Trustees,” &c. &c. Everybody—the everybody aforesaid—left a legacy, large or small, to “My friend John Bosher, Esq., as a slight token of my esteem for him, and my appreciation of his professional services.” Everybody employed Mr. Bosher as his attorney; Mr. Bosher knew everybody’s affairs much better than everybody himself did, and Mr. Bosher kept his knowledge locked in his own breast as safely as his clients’ papers were locked in the tin boxes.

Such was the gentleman who had just read the concluding sentences of the will of the late Mr. Littlegood, a mild, quiet man who, having an independence, and being fond of botany and geology, fishing and floriculture, had retired to Verbena Cottage, near Muddleford, some three-and-twenty years previously, immediately after his marriage. He had been dead a week when our tale opens, leaving a widow and two children—a daughter aged 19, and named Jessie; and a son just 21, who was christened Lorimer. Mr. Littlegood had first of all provided for his

wife; then left £2,000 to his daughter; and the rest of his property to his son.

The widowed mother and her two children were the only persons present in the little drawing-room besides the attorney. Mr. Bosher had told them that no one else need attend; and of course Mr. Bosher knew all about it, for he had drawn the will himself, and kept it in one of the before-mentioned tin boxes, labelled "Thomas Littlegood, Esq., " till death carried the testator off.

Gentleness seemed to be the prominent characteristic of Mrs. Littlegood, judging from her appearance. Facility of temper and a kind of bodily and mental inactivity, which is considered highly virtuous in people who are above the reach of want, made her a weak character. Energy was as foreign to her as courage to a hare; while anything absolutely wrong she knew nothing about except from hearsay. She was an amiable negative.

Mrs. Littlegood wept as the attorney concluded his task; wept placidly and gently, and yet sincerely.

"He was so good," she murmured.

"Excellent man, my dear madam," assented the attorney—"excellent man; a great consolation to know that."

Mrs. Littlegood sighed.

"He was the best of husbands and of fathers, and I hope," she continued, "Lorimer 'll be exactly like him."

Mr. Bosher always wished to assent to a proposition when he could; but whether in this instance he found it difficult to indulge in the hope expressed, or impossible to believe in its realization, it is not for us to decide. Certain it is that he only cleared his throat and said, "Ahem!"

Lorimer Littlegood looked at Mr. Bosher, and then looked at his mother, and then looked at his sister, and lastly took a slight glance at the mantelpiece-glass. Apparently, Mr. Lorimer Littlegood was not quite certain whether he was expected to say anything, or whether he could decently tell such a fib as

to join in the maternal hope. He had liked his father very much; few men had such an indulgent "governor;" he respected the old gentleman's goodness of heart, serenity of temper, and innocence of pursuits; but he did not exactly desire to give up his own tastes for those of his departed parent; he did not wish to become what Sydney Smith calls a "kind of holy vegetable" any more than to exchange his own luxuriant curls and bright blue eyes for the scratch wig and silver-rimmed spectacles of his father.

"Mr. Lorimer will no doubt have all the steadiness and sobriety of character that we admired so much in his father," said the lawyer, to fill up the pause; though he felt anything but satisfied with himself for telling such an untruth; for Mr. Bosher entertained strong suspicions that Lorimer was likely to be the very reverse of his father in those important points. Considering that Lorimer had been once rusticated while at Oxford, and had usually spent five times his allowance, the lawyer may perhaps be pardoned for his suspicions.

Lorimer muttered something about "doing his best," but looked fidgetty; Mrs. Littlegood glanced fondly and trustfully at her son; the attorney again cleared his throat, and, swallowing the remains of a glass of sherry which he had been sipping, he proceeded to make his bow, shake each of the three inmates of the room by the hand, and take his departure from Verbena Cottage.

We have said something about Mrs. Littlegood and her son, but nothing about her daughter. And yet Jessie deserves a little description, though we feel some diffidence in attempting it; for Jessie Littlegood was not one of those every-day persons of whom you can say that they are pretty or plain, clever or stupid, amiable or ill-tempered. There were so many apparently conflicting elements in her character, that it required some power of analysis to determine their relative proportions and strike the balance between—not the good and evil, for ~~o~~ positive evil she had perhaps none—but of the truly lovable

and the less amiable qualities. Pope, for whose opinions we have the highest respect, was nevertheless a bad judge (because a prejudiced one) of women, and never wrote so silly a line as—

“ Most women have no characters at all.”

Our own experience and study of human nature teach us the very reverse—that there is more variety of character among women than in our own sex. But as we may be at variance on this point with some philosophers, and perhaps many of our readers, we will not attempt to enter into a disquisition on the subject. We may at least record the fact that Jessie was a girl of decidedly original character. She had inherited none of her father’s placidity or her mother’s indolence. Whence came her quick temper, her strength of affection, her shrewd sense, yet her deep poetry of feeling, who shall say? or why, instead of her father’s blue eyes and light hair, and her mother’s grey eyes and hair of no color at all, she had those dark, lustrous, liquid orbs full of passion and of intellect, and those tresses only a few shades removed from black? Thought, feeling, and energy were the characteristics which even a superficial observer might have read in her face. What else there was—how much of good and noble, how much of perilous and passionate—the progress of our story will develop.

A tall and graceful figure, and regular features, with such eyes and hair as we have mentioned, made Jessie a beautiful girl—one that you would turn to look at a second time, wherever you might chance first to see her.

So thought Lorimer as he gazed for some time on his sister after Mr. Bosher had quitted the room. Mrs. Littlegood soon left them alone.

“ She will fret to death, I fear,” said Lorimer.

“ No,” said Jessie; “ not so, my dear brother. Her disposition is too calm and equable for you to fear that; it is pent-up grief that kills, not that which gushes forth in copious tears.”

“ Perhaps so,” replied Lorimer.

He was not much accustomed to think for himself, and was content always to adopt the sentiments of his sister so long as they did not run contrary to his personal wishes.

"Lorimer, do you mean to live here?" asked Jessie, after a pause.

"Eh?—Well, really, my dear girl, I have not thought about it yet; but, now you mention it, I suppose not. You see I have no rural tastes, except hunting and shooting; and one can only follow those at certain times of the year. So I dare say I shan't live here."

"What do you think of doing?" asked Jessie; "shall you follow a profession?"

"I don't think I shall; one does not feel the necessary stimulus when one's wants are provided for; don't you think so?"

"Perhaps," said Jessie, but very doubtfully.

"I want to see life," continued Lorimer.

"In what way?" asked Jessie, most innocently.

"'Pon my soul, I don't know how to answer you," replied Lorimer, after a pause; "what I mean is, that I don't know enough of the world. I want to mix with men of all classes—knock about a little—don't you understand?"

"The description is not a very precise one, my dear Lorimer," said Jessie, with a half melancholy smile; "but I think I understand it a little. You mean, that as you have tasted of some dissipation on a small scale at Oxford, you would, now that you are master of yourself and a small fortune, like to try it on the larger scale of London? Am I right?"

"No, hang it, not exactly that. Women always fancy that seeing life is being dissipated—that awful word, which is generally a bugbear of their own or their mama's raising."

"Perhaps I have strange notions on these subjects," said Jessie, scarcely noticing her brother's protest. "I believe that if we follow the straight line of duty in our own station, whatever that may be, we see all we need of what you call life;

and that those who step aside to see more of it, may occasionally be wiser in one sense—but are seldom happier—than their fellows. However, my dear brother, I don't expect a sister's tongue to turn you aside from your purpose. I only hope you may find the result of your search more conducive to your happiness than I anticipate. And now, Lorimer dear, I won't preach any more. God bless you, my brother, and shield you from harm! I must go to mama—I don't like her to be alone."

Next day, Mr. Lorimer Littlegood proceeded to call on Mr. Bosher. The attorney received him with cordiality and the respect due to a client.

"What I particularly wish you to understand, my dear sir," said he, "is the exact position of your own affairs. I dare say you are not quite acquainted with your father's property."

"I scarcely know anything about it."

"Exactly so," continued Mr. Bosher. "Well, first of all, there are six houses in Muddleford, which produce £306 per annum. Then there is a small farm at Whippenham, which lets for £180 a year. There is a sum of £3,000 on mortgage of Lord Crackley's estate, at 4 per cent.; that brings £120 a year. And then there are some shares in the railway here, which at the present dividend produce £245. Then there is exactly £1,000 a year dividends from 3 per cent consuls. All this is exclusive of the little landed property settled on your mother, and the £2,000 charged on it for your sister. So that, you see, your income is now £1,851 per annum."

"It is more than I expected," said Lorimer. "It would be absurd for me to go to the bar: don't you think so?"

"Decidedly," replied Bosher; and he *did* think so, though for very different reasons from those of his young client. "May I ask what you *do* think of doing?" he said.

"I want to see life, you know," replied Lorimer.

"Exactly so; travel, I presume?"

"No: at least, not just yet. I think I shall run up to town and look out a snug little place to live in; and join a club; and go into society, and so on. You understand?"

"Entirely," said the lawyer; and again he spoke the truth.

"By the by," said Lorimer, "I owe about four hundred at Oxford. I suppose I can raise that without much trouble?"

"I shall be happy to place it to your credit at the bank here to-day," answered the attorney.

"Thank you, thank you," said Lorimer, very heartily. "Do you want me to sign anything?"

"Not yet," replied Mr. Bosher; "and if you excuse me for giving you the advice, I'd recommend you not to sign anything you can help. You'll find, when you're seeing life, that there are *some* friends who are always anxious to possess one's autographs—on little stamped slips of paper."

"Ha, ha!" said Lorimer. Yes, I know something about that sort of thing. Good day." And he left the office.

"Capital fellow, old Bosher," he said to himself as he walked homewards.

"*He'll* go to the deuce," muttered the attorney when left alone; "and my impression is that he won't even keep to the high road to get there, but take an unusually short cut to reach it. We shall see!"

CHAPTER II

THE PECKS.

MRS. PECK was rocking the cradle, and Mr. Peck was smoking his pipe. The cradle contained the fifth little Peck which the good wife had presented to her husband. And perfectly contented with the presents he had received looked Mr. Peck, as he puffed out small clouds of tobacco-smoke, and alternately glanced at his wife and his sleeping baby. Very happy also looked Mrs. Peck, as she watched the little one, and turned now and then a smile of loving satisfaction towards her husband.

Mr. Peck was, in size, next door to a giant. He stood six feet and we don't know how many inches more in his stockings; that is to say, when he stood upright, which was very seldom. He had very broad shoulders, very large hands, and enormous feet; but a head small enough for a much more moderate-sized man. It was a round, compact, bullet-shaped head, with crisp curling hair growing thickly over it. But it was not a vicious-looking head: on the contrary, the expression of Mr. Peck's face was that of perfect placidity and good nature. You were not likely to mistake him for a genius; still less for a ruffian. He wore a suit of brown corduroy familiar to the eyes of all railway travellers; for Peck was a porter on one of the principal lines.

Mrs. Peck was almost as remarkable for her diminutive size as her husband for the reverse. She was small in height, and small in every way—small features, small hands, and small feet. Indeed, so small was she, that it was currently believed

that Mr. Peck had acquired his perpetual stoop by continually leaning down to whisper soft tales of love in her ear, during their days of courtship.

Mr. Peck gave you the idea of a lazy good-natured giant; not that he was actually idle, but he had a ponderous way of doing everything, even to the lifting of a tea-cup, that impressed one with a notion of slowness. Mrs. Peck, on the other hand, was as lively as a little bird, hopping about the room, and doing half a dozen things at once, with the most perfect ease and vivacity. They had been married about six years, and the fifth little Peck in the cradle bore testimony to the rapidity with which Mrs. Peck added to the population returns of the Registrar-General.

It was an evening in April, and a cheerful fire was burning in the grate. There needed to be something cheering indoors, for the weather outside was wretched enough. The rain came pouring down in that determined style which makes it seem a type of infinity. Who can watch the steady, heavy streams from the pea-soup colored clouds, that are clouds no longer, but part of the atmosphere itself, and believe that it will ever leave off? Chilly and damp feels everything to the touch; dreary and miserable and dirty looks every living thing in the streets; monotonous and wearying sounds the incessant pattering on the window.

"Job's very late, and it's an awful night to be out in," observed Mrs. Peck, as she looked at a little Dutch clock that hung over the dresser, and saw that it pointed to nine o'clock.

"He's old enough to take care of himself, Betsey," said Mr. Peck; "and a little rain won't hurt him."

"I hope he'll get the situation," continued the wife: "it's a sad thing for a lad of eighteen not to be earning his own living."

"Well, it ain't his fault, poor fellow," said the husband: "he *did* earn it till that there Binks became bankrupt; and Binks owns that Job's as good a stable-boy as ever he had."

"He's a good lad, I know, Tom," replied Mrs. Peck: "and I'm sure I love him as your brother; and it's because he *is* your brother that I'm so anxious about him. I hope he'll always be steady."

"Oh! he'll do," rejoined the giant, who was of a comfortable disposition, contented to take things as they came, and never trouble his little round head with the anticipation of evils that might never happen. Peck was a philosopher in his way.

A slight interruption to the conversation now took place, by Peck No. 5 in the cradle waking up and fancying that he was being defrauded of his proper share of nutriment. His dissatisfaction was expressed in the usually forcible infantile fashion of screaming, as though ten thousand pins were running into him, while his mother cried, "There, there, there, dear little fellow;" and his father looked (like a politician of the Manchester school) anxious for peace at any price.

"I think I heard a knock, Tom," cried the wife, as soon as she could make her voice audible above the baby's yells: "perhaps it's Job."

Mr. Peck went and opened the door, and admitted, not the expected Job, but a neighbor with a dripping umbrella.

"Why, it's Mr. Weazel, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Peck. "Who'd have thought of seeing you on such a night as this?"

"It *is* an unpleasant evening, certainly," replied Mr. Weazel, shaking hands with her and then taking a seat; "and that's partly the reason why I came, for I thought you might be dull, and I'd got a little news to tell you."

The speaker was a sharp-featured, small man, with bright grey eyes, and an unquiet, perpetually-twitching mouth. His age was apparently about five-and-forty, but might have been less, as he was evidently of that nervous kind of disposition that never gives the body a fair chance.

"And what's the news?" asked Mrs. Peck, who generally conducted three-fourths of the conversation, as her husband was a man of few words.

"You recollect Mr. Littlegood, don't you?" said Weazel.

"The gentleman that lived at Verbena Cottage, when I was in service at Muddleford?" asked Mrs. Peck.

"Yes. Well, he's dead—been dead these six months," said Weazel.

"You don't mean that!" exclaimed Mrs. Peck, as if the idea of any one dying was something remarkably novel and incomprehensible: "poor fellow!"

"He's dead and buried," said Weazel: and as he had already told her that Mr. Littlegood had been dead six months, it is probable that the good woman would have conjectured that he had also been buried by this time.

"He was rich, wasn't he?" asked Mrs. Peck.

"Ah! that's it," answered Weazel, looking mysterious and extremely disagreeable at the same time. "He was rich; but how did he get his riches?"

"I'm sure I don't know: he didn't do anything wrong, did he?" she asked.

"No: *he* didn't, perhaps; but his father did:" and Weazel looked more mysterious than ever.

"Goodness me! you don't mean it!" answered Mrs. Peck, with a vague feeling of terror, as if she were going to hear a ghost-story.

"Burked anybody?" asked Tom, joining the conversation for the first time.

"No—not that," replied Weazel, contemptuously; for he despised Mr. Peck's intellectual powers, as much as he envied him his bodily strength. "He was a lawyer, and he got hold of property he'd no right to; and he warn't the only lawyer mixed up in it; and the other one's alive now; and I know the man who ought to have the property; and I've been finding out all about it these six years; and I've got nearly all the proofs."

It must not be supposed that Mr. Weazel delivered this speech right off as we have written it. He only gave a sen-

tence at a time, and paused for half a minute between each one to observe the effect upon his hearers. Tom Peck took it very quietly—it did not concern him, and he didn't care anything about it. But Mrs. Peck, partly from having often seen the late Mr. Littlegood, and partly from being of a quick and sympathetic nature, felt greatly interested. She also felt rather in awe of Mr. Weazel, and that was precisely the feeling that Mr. Weazel was always anxious to inspire. It is astonishing how sharp little men love to excite respect, and even dread.

“Is your friend a good man?” she asked, after a pause.

“No: he's a beast,” candidly replied Weazel.

“Mr. Littlegood was not a bad man, I believe; least-ways, I always heard him spoken well of at Muddleford,” observed Mrs. Peck.

“I dare say he was well enough for a haristocrat,” said Weazel, whose dislike made him aspire the detested name.

“Don't you think, then,” suggested Mrs. Peck, very mildly, “that it would be better to leave things as they are? It can't be the fault of poor Mrs. Littlegood nor Miss Littlegood, nor Master Lorimer, that the grandfather got the money wrongly; and as they've been taught to consider it's theirs, and always been used to all the comforts of life, it would be a shocking thing to turn them out of all their property; don't you think so?”

“I've nothing to do with that,” answered Weazel, with the air of a Rhadamanthus. “I want justice.”

“But you say your friend's a bad man! Do you mean to get him his property directly?”

“No,” replied Weazel. “I haven't got *all* the proofs yet; and the worst of it is, I don't know where my lazy beast of a friend is.”

Mrs. Peck was glad to hear that, but did not say so.

“I tell you what *I* think,” said Mr. Peck: and as he seldom communicated his thoughts, both Weazel and Mrs. Peck listened. “I think you'd better leave this affair alone; because,

do you see, if Mr. Littlegood or whoever it is that has the money now, gets done out of it by you, of course he'll settle accounts with *you*."

"How?" asked Weazel.

"Break your neck," replied Peck.

"Oh, I dare say! we live under the protection of the laws, and those that commit ferocious assaults are punished accordingly."

"I'd chance that," said Peck, quietly: "and I dare say *he* will."

Weazel sneered; but Weazel felt far from comfortable. Cunning little men are not often blessed with physical courage.

Another knock at the door was now heard, and this time it turned out to be Job himself.

"Well, Job!" cried Mrs. Peck. "I thought you was lost."

"Nothing nigh it, sister-in-law," answered Job.

"Have you got the situation, Job?" asked Mrs. Peck, anxiously.

"All right, sister-in-law; I'm booked, safe enough: but ain't he a rum un?" and Job grinned.

"Who?"

"Why, my master as is to be; he's the rummest fellow ever I see," answered Job.

Job was a miniature edition of his brother. He had the same round head and crisp curling hair: he had the large feet and large hands also; but he was short and sturdy in build. The only thing remarkable about his face was his enormous mouth, which, when he laughed, and Job was almost always laughing, seemed literally to extend from ear to ear.

"I'll tell you all about him," said Job, looking, however, rather doubtingly towards Weazel, whom he evidently neither trusted nor liked, though poor Job was too simple a fellow to know why. "First of all, he's dressed like a Chinee, in a long silk gown with flowers all over it; and a little round flowery cap on his head; and flowery shoes on his feet; and a smoking

thing in his mouth that's got a tail all curled round and round like the boar-constructor in little Tom's book (only it ain't so big,) and it fits into a great glass thing like a bell, standing on the floor. But he smokes it, I can tell you ; for I see the smoke coming out of his mouth." Here Job paused a little for breath, and then went on.

"Says he to me, 'What's your name?' and I told him, 'Job Peck.' Then he says, 'How old are you?' and I says, 'Eighteen turned.' And then he says, 'Can you fight?'"

"Gracious me!" cried Mrs. Peck ; "what's that to do with horses?"

"'Because,' says he," went on Job, "'we may get into rows sometimes, and you'll have to take your own part ;' and so I tells him, 'I ain't afraid of one of my own size and weight—nor a bigger one neither.' Then says he, 'Stand up and have a round ;' and he squares up at me, and I at him, and he knocks me over in a jiffey ; and I gets up laughing ; and he says, 'That 'll do for the present,' and I thought so too. Then says he, 'Can you tell fibs without blushing and looking stupid?' and I answers that I've never tried ; and he says, he's 'afraid I've been very badly brought up.'"

"He ought to be ashamed of himself," cried Mrs. Peck, indignantly : "you've been very well brought up, Job—that you have ; and you should have told him, that though you're poor you're honest——"

"All right, sister-in-law," said Job, who knew the torrent of eloquence that was coming. "I did begin something of that sort, and he cries out, 'Oh yes, I know all about that—it's in all the melodramas—never mind, my lad, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings ; so if you like to come on Monday, you may—it's £20 a year wages, and three suits of livery—will that do?' So you see," cried Job, triumphantly, "he's a trump, though he is such a rum un."

"Did he say any more?" asked Mrs. Peck, pacified by the engagement and the wages, and yet not quite at ease about the moral character of Job's master.

"No; just as he'd said what I tell you, a man came to bring him the ugliest bull-dog I ever see: so I went away, and in the hall I saw another man waiting to see him with a white monkey, which he told me was a reg'lar curiosity, and he knew he'd get a fifty pound note out of the governor for him—specially as it was cruel vicious."

"What's his name, Job?" asked Mr. Weazel.

"What? the monkey's?"

"No; your new master's."

"Oh, I've got it down here in print," said Job, producing a card from his pocket.

"Mr. Lorimer Littlegood," read Weazel.

"Lor?" exclaimed Mrs. Peck.

Weazel grinned—shook hands with his friends, and went away.

CHAPTER III.

LORIMER, *en garçon*.

"RIVERS!"

"Yes, sir."

"The hookah, and a cup of coffee."

"Yes, sir."

The speakers were Mr. Lorimer Littlegood and his valet. The former was lounging on the most luxurious of sofas, in a Persian dressing-gown of rich colors and ample dimensions. The beautiful little Louis Quatorze time-piece on the mantle-shelf pointed to twelve o'clock, the table was spread with preparations for a tasteful breakfast, and the whole air of the apartment bore witness to the habits of its occupant.

It was a moderate sized room—rather small than otherwise—but furnished in a style the most extravagant and the most fanciful. Every article it contained was perfect of its kind; but there was a variety in the character of things selected, that puzzled you to decide whether the owner of them was most of a *petit-maître*, a student, a sporting-man, or a rake. There were little gems of Sèvres china worthy of the Bernal collection; books of great variety and value, side by side with the last French novels; hunting-whips, fox's brushes and muzzles, boxing-gloves and fencing foils; French paintings and statuettes, more truthful and beautiful than chastely delicate; meer-schaum and china pipe-bowls, rare snuff-boxes, medals and medallions, ancient coins, and beautiful vases full of the sweetest and freshest flowers.

As for the mere upholstery, it was evidently chosen with a

view to perfect ease and comfort. The exact shade of green which affords the most complete repose to the eye, was the prevailing color; every chair was a lounging-chair, though perfectly different from its neighbor; there were not too many mirrors on the walls, and very little gilding; while just sufficient light was admitted through the curtains to make the apartment cheerful, without producing a glare.

The obsequious valet brought the hookah and the coffee, and Mr. Lorimer Littlegood sipped the one and puffed away at the other. He was slightly altered in his personal appearance in the six months that had elapsed since his father's death. His profusion of brown curling hair, dark-blue eyes, and well-shaped face, clean shaven, except on the upper lip, where grew a small and most carefully trained moustache, made him what most young ladies would call decidedly handsome. At first glance, however, you would imagine that there was a vacancy in the expression of his countenance; but if you watched it carefully you might see that the vacancy was not real, but an assumed listlessness, which is very generally adopted by the juvenile members of dandyism in the present generation. A phrenologist would observe ample indications of sufficient intellectual powers, good moral feelings, and no great excess of animal passions. A physiologist would give a similar estimate of his character; but phrenologist and physiologist both admit, that when any single quality of the mind is constantly and specially called into play, it becomes the prominent feature of the character and absorbs a dozen otherwise counteracting influences. Unfortunately, Mr. Lorimer Littlegood was now under the special guidance of that quality which is the cause of at least three fourths of the sins of the world—vanity.

Lorimer had followed out the intentions he announced to Mr. Bosher. He had come to London—taken a set of handsome chambers in the neighborhood of Piccadilly—furnished them as we have seen—purchased four horses and a little yacht for the summer season—joined a fast club—and, in a word,

launched out rather extensively for a man with £1,850 a-year.

Mr. Littlegood was still puffing his hookah, when two young men sauntered into his room in the free-and-easy style of intimate friends.

“ Well, old fellow, how are you ? ” cried one, who was a fine hearty-looking man, with a touch of the Hibernian accent.

“ How are you, Littlegood ? ” said the other one also—a lean, light-hared, lanky youth, who appeared as if he wanted taking to pieces and rebuilding, so badly was he put together.

“ Slightly seedy,” was Mr. Littlegood’s reply to both questioners—it being absolutely essential to every young man’s success in dandyism that he should be seedy every day ; or, at all events, at any hour before ten in the evening. People who have anything to do cannot afford to be in a decrepid state of health till the evening’s champagne has warmed them into life and activity, and therefore, in order to distinguish themselves from the vulgar herd of workers and thinkers, men about town must be in a perpetual state of matutinal imbecility.

“ Where were you fellows last night ? ” he asked, in return.

“ Frightfully long debate in the House,” answered the lean youth ; “ didn’t divide till four in the morning.”

“ And divided then exactly as we should have done at seven in the evening, before any of the speeches were made,” added the Irishman.

“ You are a pretty fellow to say that, O’Neil,” retorted the other, “ after having made a three-quarters of an hour speech yourself—though, to be sure, I don’t suppose *that* made anybody vote differently from his previous intentions.”

“ *Que voulez vous ?* ” answered O’Neil. “ It isn’t to change anybody’s opinions I speak, my boy ; and, as a member of the House, you ought to know that nobody else *does* speak for such a purpose. It’s only to make people outside talk about me, and get up a cry over the water, maybe, for O’Neil as Attorney-General, or Chief Justice, or Commissioner of something or other.”

"It's a nuisance to have to listen, though, when men talk for their own ends," growled the other.

"And that's precisely what we wish it to be, Lavers," answered O'Neil; "if we didn't make ourselves nuisances we'd never get anything."

"You may have anything you want here," cried Lorimer, "without making yourselves nuisances; and that's exactly what I shall vote you two fellows if you go on talking shop like that. What the deuce do *I* care about your stupid debates?"

"By the way, Littlegood, why don't you go into Parliament?" asked O'Neil.

"Because he hasn't spent all his money yet, and isn't a bit afraid of the sheriff—time enough then," said Lavers, answering for him, and looking meaningly towards O'Neil.

"True enough," cried the Irishman, quite good humoredly; "they're blessed privileges we enjoy; and if it weren't for the committees that make a man get up so early, and the debates that keep him up so late, I should like Parliament amazingly."

"You missed Mrs. Puddleton's party last night," said Lorimer.

"I was there for half an hour," answered Lavers, "and was making myself remarkably comfortable with a very pretty girl—quite new, too—when that horrid whipper-in of our party came and hunted me out, looking as frightened all the time as if his life depended on getting me safe into the House."

"His seat did—and that's life to him," said O'Neil. "Was it good—the 'hop,' Littlegood?"

"Tolerable," was the reply; "there were some very pretty girls—though *who* they were it is utterly impossible to say. Nobody ever does know where Mrs. Puddleton picks up her friends."

"Was little Stanley there?" asked Lavers.

"Do you mean *Miss* Stanley?" returned Lorimer, coloring slightly.

"Yes—Ellen Stanley; flirting little thing, inclined to be pert," replied Lavers, quietly.

"I shouldn't have known her by your description, I confess," said Lorimer, "though I have had the pleasure of meeting Miss Stanley several times; and, between ourselves, Lavers, I don't think it's quite the right way to speak of a young lady —that which you adopted just now."

There was a little touch of warmth in Lorimer's manner as he spoke thus; and Lavers, cool as Wenham Lake ice, saw it, and inwardly chuckled at it, because it was precisely the feeling he had wished to elicit.

"My dear fellow," he replied, "if I had known that you had any *penchant* in that quarter I would not have——"

"There's no need of any particular *penchant* for a lady, I trust, to account for one's disliking to hear her spoken disrespectfully of by name," said Lorimer, interrupting him.

Mr. Lavers was relieved from the necessity of a reply by the entrance, at this moment, of three or four more of Lorimer's friends. The truth is that Mr. Lavers had tried to captivate Miss Ellen Stanley, and that young lady, being unaccountably blind to his mental and moral attractions, had snubbed him accordingly; whereupon he adopted the usual expedient of mean people, of abusing what he could not obtain.

Of the new comers, one was a sporting-man, another was a noisy man, and another was merely an exquisite. Only one thing they had in common—they were all idle men, and liked to lounge away an hour or two every morning in a friend's rooms, where tobacco and liquids were plentiful, without any cost to their own pockets.

"What are we all going to do?" cried O'Neil.

"I'm going to the 'Corner,' to set my book on the Oaks straight a little," answered one.

"I'm going to look at a dog-cart mare that's said to be first rate, and the figure not too high," said another.

"I'm going up to Lord's to see the first match of the season between our county and the Marylebone," said another.

"I'm off to the Treasury," said O'Neil.

"No doubt you are," growled Lavers, *sotto voce*; "I'm going to make some calls. What are you going to do, Littlegood?"

"First of all," said Lorimer, "I'm going to write some notes; then I'm going to give half-an-hour's instruction to a highly promising new tiger that I've engaged; then I'm going to make a few purchases; and then I shall be very happy to see any or all of you to dine with me here."

"Bravo—agreed!" cried everybody; and one by one they dropped off promising to return at eight—no fear of their forgetting.

Lorimer then proceeded to write his notes, which were all very short. One was to his tailor—another to a horse dealer in the country—another to the "captain" of his little yacht—and two of them were to ladies. Perhaps we may venture to take a peep at these. One of them—bah! one of them was only to his sister. Nevertheless, let us see what he says:—

"From all this, my dear sister, you will conclude that I am desperately in love; but for once even your shrewd sense will be at fault. Ellen Stanley is pretty, fascinating, clever (a little too much of this), and altogether more to my taste than any girl I know: but, somehow, I don't feel a bit in love with her. She pleases me; pleases me very much, too. And yet I leave her without a pang, go home and sleep as soundly as if I had been talking to old Bosher instead of the handsomest girl in London. Can you explain this? Why is it that my feelings are completely untouched?"

"Because, my dear brother," said Jessie to herself as she read the letter next morning—"because you are too much in love with yourself just yet. No such enemy to love as vanity."

The other letter was to Miss Ellen Stanley's mamma:—

"Your kindness in inviting me to join your little family circle whenever I please, is most warmly appreciated by me: and I can scarcely imagine a more happy and charming house-

hold than yours must be, if I may venture to judge from what I have seen of its inmates."

Pretty well—considering that Mr. Lorimer had seen no one of the lady's family save Miss Ellen Stanley herself.

The notes finished, Mr. Littlegood gave the promised half-hour's lesson to our friend Job Peck, made an elaborate toilet, stepped into his cabriolet, and drove down Piccadilly with Job perched up behind—his first appearance on that "proud eminence."

CHAPTER IV.

POOR LITTLE ROSE.

IN a dirty, little, narrow court, in one of the worst parts of Lambeth, dwelt one William Bennoch—commonly called “Staggering Bill”—with his wife and two children.

He was once a blacksmith, and he styled himself one still; but being in a perpetual state of drunkenness, as his *soubriquet* implies, he seldom worked till reduced to the verge of starvation, or rather till he was unable to procure another glass of spirits—for it is astonishing what a small quantity of solid food was ever consumed by “Staggering Bill.”

The worst of Bill was, that he was the most morose and ill-tempered of brutes when the fumes of the drink first began to pass off; so that it almost tempted those around him to give him some liquor to preserve the good humor, which seemed habitual to him while quite drunk.

His wife was one of those strange beings, so commonly mated with drunkards, that puzzle you to decide what their natural and original character was. She was a shrew and a coward together; but you could not tell whether her temper had always been at fault, or whether the continued misery of her life had given her the scolding tongue. When Bill was maudlin he was often sentimental, and would weep as he told you that “that there woman’s blessed tongue had druv him to drink.” But then it is a remarkable fact, that people who are drunkards have always, according to their own accounts, been “driven to it” by something or somebody; it never, in the least degree arises from their own depraved appetites.

Mrs. Bennoch, perhaps, might more reasonably say that *she* had been driven to drink ; for certainly she occasionally flew to the bottle for consolation when distracted by her husband's brutality and their state of destitution. Apparently she had been handsome once ; at least her features were well formed ; but, then, the haggard, lean countenance, and the often blood-shot eyes, destroyed the effect of the original beauty. Nor did her dirty and tattered dress diminish the repulsive effect of her face and her tall bony figure.

As far as the vice of intoxication went, the difference between Bill and herself was this : that Bill was always drunk, or had just been so and was just going to be so again ; while she was often sober for weeks together. She took in washing when she could get any ; but having the misfortune occasionally to drop a few things into the fire, and often to scorch others brown, she was not likely to be a popular or highly patronized laundress. Had it not been for the strong feeling of benevolence displayed by the poor to the poor, she would have wanted both work and bread more often than she did.

“Dick ! you young vagabone, come here,” screamed Mrs. Bennoch to her son ; “where is the brat, hang him ?” she continued, as she got no answer.

“Dare say he’s in the Grapes,” suggested her husband, who was in the three-quarter stage.

“What should he do there ?” she answered snappishly ; “do you think he’s going to be as big a sot as his father ?”

“What’s the odds ?” hiccupped Bill, sublimely indifferent and perfectly good-tempered.

“Ugh, you brute !” cried Mrs. B., and she went out into the court and screamed “Dick !” at the top of her voice, besides inquiring of all her neighbors whether they had seen her hopeful son. She also took a peep in at the Grapes (but to her credit be it said, she did *not* take a glass there) ; and at last returned home without finding the truant Dick.

“If you weren’t such a drunken, lazy brute, you might take

these things home for one yourself," she screamed to her husband.

"All right, old girl; *I'll* take 'em—why shouldn't *I*?" answered Bill, in his best of tempers, and making an effort to get up.

"Don't be a fool," cried his wife. "A pretty likely thing that I'd send *you* to Mrs. Travers's, my best customer, and the only lady I work for now; I shouldn't see another thing of hers nor a bit of *her* money again."

"What's-the-matter-o'-me?" asked the innocent Bill, as if perfectly unconscious that he was not fit to be presented to any lady in the land.

Mrs. Bennoch disdained to answer, but continued her own remarks, talking rather to herself than her husband.

"If Rose wasn't so timid I might send her; but it's a plaguy long way for Rose—poor little Rose;" and strange to say, as the woman uttered that name all her vixenish and vicious looks vanished, and there was a soft and womanlike expression, half-smiling and half-tearful, on her haggard and worn face.

And who was Rose—poor Rose?

Right well had her mother said "poor Rose;" for what fate could be harder for a young girl than to live in such a home, and with such parents, as those of little Rose Bennoch?

A strange child was Rose—her mother had insisted on giving her that name—for ever hiding in dark corners, and sitting so still that a listener could scarcely have heard her breathing. A little, slight, delicate child she looked, with her large, very large, dark eyes, and their long black fringes, contrasting with the white pale skin of her face. She never smiled—or so rarely that few of the neighbours had ever seen her do so. Even Dick, her brother, had never succeeded in making her laugh. Her face had an almost constant expression of terror, or at least of apprehension; but mingled with the look of fear was a strange and almost sinister look of cunning, like that of a person habituated to falsehood and stratagem. You will see it

in the professional pickpocket, and in the detective policeman ; in the smuggler, the sheriff's officer, and the sharp attorney ; and equally in the ill-treated wife, or child, of the domestic tyrant. Not that Rose was ill-treated ; she always kept out of her father's way, and she was the only creature for whom her mother had any real affection. Yet Rose was almost as much afraid of her mother as of her father ; she heard her scolding tongue, and she had seen her several times intoxicated. So Rose seldom came out into the light of day, but crept into dark corners, and hid herself, and dreamt long day-dreams of the world outside their narrow court, of which she rarely ever had a glimpse.

She had a book always with her—one and the same book. It was not so much for the pleasure of reading the book that she thus kept it, but because it had two pictures in it : one was a simple picture of a family at breakfast in a comfortably furnished room, with a smiling mama, a very precisely dressed papa, and three extremely neat and good-looking children. And Rose would look at the picture for hours in her dark corner, till her large eyes ached, and envy (but she did not know that it *was* envy she felt) the happy children in their happy home.

The other picture represented a simple English landscape with a church, and waving trees, and a stile, on which sat a young lady in a light summer costume, with a broad-brimmed straw hat, like those wherein our sisters again luxuriate in these latter days. And this picture pleased Rose even more than the other : she had never seen the country, never beheld any other foliage than that of the squares and parks of sooty London, and that seldom enough ; yet she would sigh for the fields and trees she saw here depicted, and long to be the happy girl seated on the stile.

“ Rose dear, Rose !” cried her mother, in such gentle tones, that a stranger would scarcely have known the voice to be the same as a few minutes before was screaming in the court, or scolding the drunken husband.

A little rustling might be heard in the further corner of the room, behind a large washing-tub turned up on its side, and Rose came out, with her book hidden under her apron, and glided quietly to her mother's side.

"Would you be afraid to go a long way off with these clothes, Rose—all by yourself?"

"No," answered Rose; and she spoke the truth, for she scarcely knew what fear meant, except in connection with her father or mother.

"It's a very long way," said her mother.

"Is it, is it," asked Rose, hesitating—"is it in the country?" having, however, but the vaguest idea of where the country was.

"No, it ain't so far as all that, dear," said her mother; and Rose was sorry to hear it. "It's only nigh to Berkeley Square, where Mrs. Travers lives: that's the nice kind lady that came herself one day you know, and patted you on the head, and said you ought to go to school; and so you ought, goodness knows, for you're nigh thirteen—but it can't be helped. The bundle ain't a heavy one, for it's only some fine things. Lawk a mercy knows how she trusts such things to me; but she *does*, and we'd often go without a bit of bread if she didn't. Are you hungry, Rose?"

"No, mother," answered the girl.

"But you've had nothing to-day—the child will be starved," she said.

"I'm not hungry, mother—indeed I'm not," replied Rose.

"Poor child!" muttered the mother once more; and the tears stood in her eyes, as she turned away to fasten up the bundle.

"May I take my book?" asked Rose, as she saw her mother looking at her.

"You can't look at it in the street," said her mother; "you'd better leave it at home."

"Let me take it, please, do," said Rose, beseechingly.

"Very well, dear—let me put it in your pocket—there, that'll do. What a strange child it is!" she added, as she watched little Rose's form retreating down the court; and then the mother turned back and cast a look of loathing on her drunken husband snoring on the bed.

Rose went steadily on her way, looking about her very little, yet observing everything that came directly in her sight with more than the usual childish curiosity. And many a passer-by turned back to look at the raggedly clad, poor, thin child, with her large dark eyes, and that strange expression wherein was so much of meaning—so much intellect, cunning, and timidity.

Many times had Rose to ask her way; for the fashionable quarters of London were a wilderness to her; but she never applied to a policeman for her information, because she had more than once seen her father in the hands of one of those officials, and looked with a little dread on them. She had reached as far as the Regent's Circus, in Piccadilly, where she became bewildered by the number of carriages and horses eternally passing by in four directions. The chance of ever getting over that terribly wide crossing seemed to her almost a hopeless one, and she stood nearly ten minutes waiting for one. At length there was a slight lull of traffic for a moment, and she managed to rush to the landing-place, with the lamp-post in the centre, half across the road. Here she had to stop again for some time; then fancying she had a chance, but looking only one way instead of both, she started off again. There was a loud yell to her from some foot-passengers as a splendidly appointed cabriolet was being driven past at the very moment; the driver pulled his horse almost back on to its haunches, as he uttered a cry of terror himself—the child hesitated at the very moment when she should have leapt forward, and in an instant she was knocked down and was actually under the horse's feet.

She was speedily dragged from thence, and the owner of the cabriolet jumped out, exclaiming—

"My God! she is killed!"

"No, no—she ain't killed; but she must have some of her bones broken."

"Carry her in here—give her to me," cried the young man, who forgot all his dandyism and everything else at the moment, in his anxiety for the poor child he had unwittingly injured. "Run for a doctor, for God's sake!"

Poor little Rose was conveyed into a shop close at hand, and a doctor was soon in attendance.

"Small bone of the left leg broken," said he, "but not a bad fracture, I think; blow on the head, which has stunned her—but not very severe. I should recommend, sir," he continued, "that she should be conveyed to Charing Cross Hospital."

"Get a cab," cried the young man whom he addressed; "be quick—is there any better way of conveying her, doctor?"

"No—but she must be driven slowly, and if she can lie on some one's lap who will keep the limb *thus*, it will be better."

"She shall—she shall," was the answer, and the young man slipped a couple of guineas into the surgeon's hand, and then bidding those in attendance to carry the child carefully to the cab, he first seated himself in it, and then, having her carefully placed on his lap, he held her as tenderly as a mother could have held her infant, and bade the driver go gently to the hospital.

"Poor child! poor child!" he said, "poor enough she looks, indeed—ragged, I see—and thin, very thin. By Jove! I believe she's half-starved: people are so, I know—and yet I often forget it—God forgive me! She's not plain—indeed, she's pretty. What a fair skin—and what jet-black eyelashes! I wonder who she is? Well, I swear she shall never want for anything while I live on earth!"

Five minutes later, little Rose was stretched on one of the hospital beds, and a surgeon was engaged in setting the broken bone. He did not consider it a bad case.

"Thank Heaven! don't let her want for anything—I will pay for all," cried the young man.

And Lorimer Littlegood went away. He had seen a bit of life he did not expect to see: and much more strange experience was thereby in store for him.

CHAPTER V.

STAGGERING BILL RECEIVES A MORNING CALL.

MR. BILL BENNOCH was not a man of intensely strong paternal affection. Therefore, when Mrs. Bennoch attempted to rouse him out of his drunken sleep at nine o'clock in the evening, and told him that poor little Rose was lost, "Staggering Bill" merely replied that "if she was lost it war'nt no use looking for her;" with which perfectly true, though scarcely paternal, reflection, he turned over on his side and attempted to go to sleep again. But the mother, whose agony of mind at hearing no tidings of her child grew more painful every moment, seized a tub of water in which she had been washing some clothes, and emptied it all over "Staggering Bill."

If there was one thing Bill hated more than another it was water. He disliked it at any time, in any form, and for any purpose. As for drinking it pure, he would as soon have thought of swallowing Prussic acid; even when diluting his grog with it, he was of the Irishman's opinion, that every drop of it helped to spoil the spirit. To perform an ablution in it was the farthest thing from his thoughts. Baths and wash-houses, instead of attracting thousands to them daily, would certainly have been immediately shut up for want of patronage if all people had been of Mr. Bennoch's peculiar opinions. When, therefore, he was thoroughly soused by the flood of soap and water which his wife dashed over him, he sprung up with a tremendous oath, and caught everything he could lay his hands on, including the washing-tub, and hurled them frantically at the spot where his wife had stood. But Mrs. Ben-

noch knew the effect of her own attack too well to await the result, and so she was safe outside the door while Bill was shivering to pieces his "household gods" (as Lord Byron called his furniture), but hurting nobody.

When he could find nothing more to hurl, and discovered that there was no one to hurl anything at, he swore all the oaths he was acquainted with (and few people had a more extensive knowledge of the subject), till his tongue and his arms were together thoroughly tired out. Then he turned to the bed, and was going to fling himself on it again; but so thoroughly saturated was it with wet that he had not the courage to do so. He picked up a chair and sat down, and growled and muttered, and felt savage and damp and fuddled, and was perhaps altogether as uncomfortable as a man well could be. He had nothing to drink, and no money wherewith to procure anything; there was no fire and no light in the room, except what was afforded by the single gaslight burning in the centre of the court in which his house stood.

After he had been growling for some time, and making vain attempts to settle himself into a comfortable doze, the door of the room was gently opened, and a small rough head put cautiously in.

"Who's there?" cried Bill, with a sudden start, as the door creaked.

"It's only me, father," was the reply: "where's mother?"

It will be as well not to transcribe the words of Bill's answer to this question. They certainly frightened his son Dick a little, but not so much as a stranger might have expected; for Dick was not easily alarmed at his father's violence. Words he cared little for at all; and having discovered that if he got a fair start his father could never catch him, and that if his father threw anything at him he could almost always jump out of the way in time to save his bones, he had no great fear for his personal safety, especially as he always took care that his

respected parent, when in a rage, should not get between him and the door.

“What’s become of Rose, eh?” asked Bill of his hopeful son.

“Don’t know, father. Mother sent me to look, and I’ve been everywheres—all the way to Mrs. What’s-her-name that she was a carryin’ the clothes to: but they haven’t heerd nothin’ of her.”

“She’s prigged the clothes and pawned ‘em for liquor,” said Bill, doggedly—such being precisely what Bill knew he should have done himself.

“That she ain’t,” cried Dick, indignantly; “Rose ain’t up to such things, and Rose don’t drink liquor.”

Bill’s answer was to whirl his fist in the direction of his son’s head; but Dick “bobbed,” and the stroke missed him, while it nearly upset Mr. William Bennoch himself.

“You young vagabone!” growled he.

“You leave me alone then, can’t you?” cried Dick, who was very fond of being saucy when he knew he could escape the consequences.

Bill for a moment entertained the idea of recommencing hostilities; but perhaps it struck him that the exertion would be too great, and so he sat still and only growled.

“Dick,” said he, after a pause—“have you got any money?”

“No, father,” was the short reply.

“Don’t tell lies, Dick: you know you have,” cried Bill, half surlily and half coaxingly.

“Well, if a poor boy has got just one single penny, mayn’t a poor chap keep it for hisself?” whined Dick.

“Lend it me, Dick. I’ll pay it back to-morrow.”

“Oh! I dare say,” said Dick: “you owe me fourpence already, and don’t I wish I may get it?”

“I tell you what, Dick,” continued the exemplary father, without noticing the last speech, “just go to the Grapes and get a penn’orth of gin and bring it here, and you shall have

half of it, and I'll pay you back all the money to-morrow—I'll make it sixpence—there now."

Dick had a strong presentiment that he should be "done" somehow; but the temptation was too great to be resisted; and so he went on his errand.

Dick Bennoch was a thorough London boy; and the boys of London are as distinctive a class of human beings as the North American Indians. You will not find their counterparts all over the world. A Paris *gamin* slightly assimilates to them, but is a very different animal nevertheless. A thorough-bred London boy, like our friend Dick, is invariably dirty, sharp, and of doubtful honesty. If he be deficient in either of these distinctive marks, he is not of the true breed. Cleanliness is utterly abjured by this juvenile fraternity; a stupid fellow is sent to Coventry, or imposed on, or made a butt of, so that he is obliged to retire from their respectable society. And then their sharpness is of that peculiar cast that loves roguery, and finds its most pleasant exercise in cheating the unsuspecting—not exactly in downright thieving, pocket-picking, and so forth; for there is a line of distinction between the class we are speaking of and the juvenile pickpockets—but in petty roguery and chicanery of all kinds. It is the fun of the thing they love—the excitement of the game, quite as much as the stakes they play for. A London boy will be happier with a penny got by a clever trick of his own, than with a fourpenny piece bestowed on him without solicitation or exertion on his part.

After all, perhaps, the only real distinction between the mere London boy and the young thief is—that accident, or somebody's care (Heaven knows whose), has prevented the former from yet joining the latter. Of course they are the raw material out of which the pickpockets are formed, and it is surprising how little training they require to make them adepts in the "art of abstracting."

The London boy seldom knows how to write or read, but he is wonderfully quick at figures. Try to get the better of

him in any matter of calculation, and you will soon give up the attempt in despair. How he performs his mental arithmetic it might puzzle us to say, or himself to tell you; but the results of his ready reckoning are always perfectly correct, except when they are wilfully incorrect in his own favor. There is, also, a complete freemasonry among the class: let a London boy meet a lad in the street whom he has never seen before, and he will tell, almost at a glance, but certainly after two minutes' conversation with him, whether he is of "the right sort"—whether he belongs to the honorable fraternity of London boys, or is a novice, a greenhorn, a "muff."

How the London boy lives it is difficult to say. He generally has a parent, sometimes both; for he is apt to turn thief or workhouse boy when he is an orphan. So that he generally has a home of some kind, where he will occasionally have a bit of food tossed to him as if he were a dog, and with the addition of a few ugly names thrown at him at the same time and an imprecation for not getting his own living. Considering that he has never been taught anything useful in his life, it is scarcely astonishing that he possesses no ready means of earning his livelihood. He manages, however, to pick up two or three shillings every week by holding horses, running on errands, and winning at pitch-and-toss with less skilful players than himself.

His notions of the distinctions of society are rather limited. All men who are well dressed he calls nobs and swells, and supposes them to be pretty much on an equality with each other, and to have every earthly thing they want. Whence come their revenues he knows not, and never troubles his head to consider. Perhaps he fancies they have their wealth all stowed away in big boxes at home, or that the Queen sends it to them; but all he *does* know is, that he should like to stand in their shoes, and to wear their coats and eat their dinners.

But while we are describing the class our own specimen of it has returned from the Grapes, and brought the gin.

Bill Bennoch put the mug to his mouth and gulped it all down, forgetting his promise to give his son the half of it.

"It's all a cheat, Dick," he cried—"they give you bad measure."

"Too sharp for that, father," replied Dick, chuckling; "but you see I drank my half first, 'cos I thought you might forget to give it me."

As soon as he said this he dived to escape the blow that he knew would be aimed at him, and he escaped from the room, while Bill, whose last exertion made him completely lose his balance, found himself stretched on the floor; and thinking that it would do as well as any other place, under the circumstances, he remained there.

In the morning, when Mr. Bennoch awoke, the sunlight was streaming into his room through the dirty window. The only chance the sun had of penetrating his apartment was early in the morning; and its rays happening to fall right on to the eyelids of the slumbering Bill, it is scarcely surprising that they woke him. It took him some time to make out where he was, and a great deal longer to remember how he came there. And certainly, when he looked about him, the view was far from inviting or satisfactory. Tables, chairs, washing-tubs, crockery, and pewter-pots were heaped together in extraordinary confusion, and in a greater or less degree of dilapidation. He was the sole occupant of the room; for his wife had spent the night in the streets fruitlessly searching after her missing daughter; while Dick, who considered his father dangerous at present, had prudently taken up his quarters with one of his intimate "pals" in the neighborhood.

A knocking at the door aroused Bill's attention.

"Come in!" he cried; and, making sure that it was his wife, he seized a broken piece of a washing-tub ready to hurl it at her head. But his benevolent intentions were frustrated by the entrance of a man, instead of his beloved spouse. The man was

a gentleman, too : and his appearance formed a strong contrast with that of the drunken brute on the floor.

“ Who are you ? ” cried Bill, with a vague idea that it might be a policeman ; “ I haven’t been beating anybody—I’ve a right to smash my own things if I like, haven’t I ? What’s it to you ? I haven’t got five shillings, so it’s no use taking me up before the beaks—it’s only a shocking expense to the country to have to keep me in prison, that’s wot it is—you know the beak said so last time himself ; so leave me alone, can’t you ? ”

“ Is your name Bennoch ? ” asked the new comer, unheeding this grand speech.

“ You’ve got it all right in the charge-book—Lor’ bless you ! the sergeant knows me well enough—it wouldn’t do for me to give a false name : everybody knows Bill Bennoch—‘ Staggering Bill,’ the vagabonds calls him.”

“ I believe you’ve got a daughter ? ” said the gentleman.

“ She’s bolted—prigged all the linen and popped it for drink,” stuttered Bill, who seemed to have convinced himself of the truth of what he was saying.

“ For shame, sir ! ” cried the gentleman ; “ I tell you your poor child is in the hospital with a broken leg.”

“ Who’s broke it ? ” cried Bill ; “ one of them lobsters, I suppose—they’re always breaking people’s limbs, they are.”

Lorimer Littlegood was dreadfully disgusted. The man was apparently dead to all feeling ; for even the news of his child’s sufferings produced no effect on him.

“ Where’s your wife ? ” he asked angrily.

“ Drunk,” said Bill, “ quite drunk—smashed everything in the place and gone to the Grapes—she’s got tick there and I haven’t—that’s all about it.”

“ I wonder whether there are any neighbors of this brute that I can talk to,” said Lorimer to himself. “ My God ! what a home for the poor child ! ” And he was leaving the room.

“ Hi ! hi ! ” shouted Bill, “ can’t you stand something before

you go? You see my wife's been and beaten me almost to a jelly, and I want something to set me up again—I haven't got a nag—and no tick at the Grapes."

Lorimer banged the door in disgust, and left Bill alone.

"He's no gentleman," said Bill; "he's a hippopotamus—that's what *he* is;" and he lay down again with his head under the dresser and snored.

Scarcely had Lorimer got outside the house when a woman with a wild and haggard look met him.

"What is it, sir? what is it about my child, sir? the neighbours say you've come about her."

"Are you Mrs. Bennoch?" asked Lorimer.

"Yes, yes."

"Your little girl has had an accident," said Lorimer, gently; "but don't be alarmed; it is not serious, and she is well taken care of."

"Take me to her—please, sir, take me to her," cried the woman, frantically.

"I will—indeed, I will," said Lorimer; and in five minutes more they were rattling through the streets, side by side, in a hack cab, driving towards Charing Cross Hospital.

"I wonder what sort of child this would have been," thought Lorimer, as he saw her clasped in her mother's arms, "if both parents had been alike, drunken brutes?"

Yet Rose was scarcely so pleased to see her mother as a stranger would have expected; and her eyes wandered from her to the form of the handsome young stranger, on whom she gazed with a look of intense inquiry, yet half bewilderment.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER THE OPERA.

ONE of the most incontrovertible of ancient laws is that which declares that no one is wise *omnibus horis*. Our friend Lorimer, so far from affording any exception to the truth of this maxim, exemplified it in the highest degree; for he was wise so very few hours out of the twenty-four, that the effects of his wisdom were rarely visible. People who resolve to see life—to know the world, and so forth—generally start on their expedition with the idea that they are going to have a pleasant voyage. No doubt they calculate on a few foul winds, an occasional collision, and a loose lynch-pin or two; but such trifles weigh but slightly with the *agrémens* of travel. How different is the reality! There is little picturesque, entertaining, or pleasing, in any sense, to be found in the Life-journey; at all events, after the first charm of novelty has worn off, and the traveller sees things in their proper light, instead of through the spectacles of curiosity and surprise. And by degrees weariness and disgust creep upon him: he is tired of the turmoil, and out of humor with his fellow-travellers: he has found the world less good, less wise, and less amusing than he expected it: and he is far from satisfied with the part he himself has played in it. The journey is over: he takes to his bed—thinks how much better he might have employed his time—knows that it is “too late:” turns his face to the wall, and—yes, the journey is over.

All this may be very trite and very true: but it will bear repetition. Every day young gentleman are starting on this

same voyage "to see life," with the same hopes and aspirations, the same anticipations of delight, as had been felt by all their predecessors on the road, though any one of those who had gone before them would have told them how completely they were destined to be disappointed. And yet they would never have believed them. When it was first said that "Experience teaches"—no matter whom—there was more in the saying than we generally assign to it. Not only does experience teach, but it teaches the only lessons we really learn and take to heart. All the good counsel in the world—all the sound maxims—all the wise warnings—all the recorded truths—will not deter a man from an act of folly so effectually as the fact of his having once experienced the evil effects of that act. Wise heads have tried to reform human nature for some five or six thousand years—it remains pretty much as it was in the beginning. A little polish here, and a dab of paint there, to make it *look* better perhaps; but the substance, the core, is of the same old material yet. Well, it is God's work, after all: and it may occasionally strike transcendentalists and cynics that, perchance, poor Human Nature was intended to be what it is and always has been.

If this little disquisition is *apropos* of anything, it is of the fact that Mr. Lorimer Littlegood was remarkably like the rest of the world: and if, when he does foolish and wicked actions and gets into scrapes, the reader feel disposed to be indignant with him and call him ugly names, let him or her be assured that Lorimer is no worse than his fellows, and that his biographer is sketching from life, and not drawing fancy portraits of impossible heroes.

Lorimer was now in the very first stage of his journey. He had not even learnt that last night's champagne is never worth this morning's headache: on the contrary, he quaffed the cup with delight, and made the best of the headache with the aid of hock and soda-water. Happy youth! yes, happy if you were not destined to those abominable *désillusions* that remind one of awaking from some delicious dream of Paradise, to find

that it is a snowing morning, the shaving water is hard, your razors won't cut, there's nothing nice for breakfast, and two creditors with *very* long bills are waiting down stairs to see you.

It is half-past twelve o'clock at night—why should we call it morning?—the Opera is over, and supper is served in a snug little room in Violette's Club. The supper is for six, and six gentlemen are there to partake of it. First, there is Mr. Lorimer Littlegood—then there is Mr. Lavers, and Mr. O'Neil, the Count Roussillon, Tom Baker, and Captain Kelly.

The gentle reader is already acquainted with the first three gentlemen: the fourth, was a French Count of multitudinous accomplishments, imposing personal appearance, wonderful resources, but unknown revenues. The fifth was a very good, straightforward, jolly country gentleman, whose only weakness was an occasional run up to London in order to mix, for about a fortnight at a time, with the very fastest men upon town, and get rid of as much ready cash in that period as would support his establishment in Suffolk during the rest of the year.

The last on the list, the great Captain Kelly—how shall I describe him? Imagine the height of everything big and astounding; picture to yourself six feet two of sinew, bone, and muscle, that would have constituted any decent boxer champion of the prize ring; conceive a very full and florid face, with the most tremendous of decidedly red whiskers, and a crop of hair of the same hue and proportionately luxuriant in curl and quantity; think of the very extreme of fashion in the shape, make, and material of a gentleman's costume; fancy a loud, rich-toned, and commanding voice, with the strongest taste of the Hibernian brogue; an air of the most perfect ease and self-satisfaction; a conviction of being able to do every earthly thing—from governing a kingdom to standing on his head, from commanding the forces at Sebastopol to playing on the cornet-à-piston—better than any other created being; an

eye that never quailed, a cheek that never blushed, a mouth that for ever smiled—add all these things and qualities together, (with fifty others that we have forgotten at the moment,) and *voilà* our friend Captain Kelly.

Captain of what? Of anything and of everything—sure, he'd served in the Guards and in the Ballinabraggin Militia—in the Austrian Imperial Guard and the Texan Fencibles—in the Spanish Legion and the army of the Rajah of Trinchinapoli—in the Illinois Volunteers and in the body-guard of the Grand Llama of Thibet. If you ventured to ask him where he had seen service, indeed, there was scarcely a spot of earth, from Nova Zembla to Terra del Fuego, that could escape his enumeration as the scene of some of his martial services and exploits. He would crush you beneath a mountain of names of places that it would be utterly impossible to remember the fiftieth part of, that you never heard of before to your recollection, and that would take you a considerably long time to discover in any atlas yet given to the world by geographers.

There were only two points on which Captain Kelly declined to be communicative ; or would have declined if any one had been ill-bred enough to press for information—*where* he lived, and *how* he lived. It is just possible that the reader and I may live to discover both these doubtful and puzzling things.

Supper was served, and an excellent supper it was. The wine, too, was good and deliciously cool: the servants waited well, and the feasters were men who appreciated all these advantages.

“Did you see Mrs. M’Shane to-night, Count?” asked Lorimer.

“Yes, I see her: she is beautiful woman,” replied the Count.

“You know her history, of course?” remarked O’Neil.

“Not entirely,” replied Lorimer—“except that report says she had fifty thousand pounds, and that your extremely sensible countryman, her present husband, ran away with her in consideration of her—attractions.”

"That's not exactly true," said O'Neil; "she had not quite so much as that—about thirty thousand, I believe."

"I have heard, and I believe I'm right," said Lavers, "that she never had more than *twenty* thousand, and also that she ran away with some one else before she finally ran to win the amiable M'Shane."

"The devil a one of you is quite right," cried Captain Kelly, "though my friend Lavers is nearer the mark than any of you."

"What is the truth, then, Kelly?" asked Tom Baker, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, from not being very well "up" in the latest London scandal, but who was eager enough to become acquainted with it.

"I ought to know the truth, Baker, my boy," returned the Captain, "seeing that I've been particularly well acquainted with the lady myself."

"Oh! oh! a confession from the Captain," said two or three of the party. "Tell us the story, Kelly, like a good fellow."

"It's no story, but the gospel truth, my boys," returned Kelly. "May be you don't know that I ran away with Polly Flight that *was*, and Polly M'Shane that *is*, myself?"

A roar of laughter followed this announcement.

"It's true then," cried the Captain, "and I wouldn't mention it only among such friends as yourselves—for, of course, you wouldn't demean yourselves by repeating a word I'm going to tell you."

"Certainly not—go on," cried everybody.

"Well then, here goes," said the Captain, and first of all he drained a half tumbler of champagne. "I was introduced to Polly Flight—Miss Mary Flight, I mean—about two years ago, and every one swore she had fifty thousand pounds. Now, I'm not a mercenary man," (here the Captain looked boldly round to see if anybody was laughing, but miraculously every one kept his countenance,) "and so I didn't care for the money *much*: but Polly is a very pretty girl, as you'll all admit."

"Very," cried the Englishmen.

"*Superbe*," said the French Count.

"Then, you see, it was quite natural that I should fall in love with Polly Flight—and I did fall in love with her. There were two or three miserable little hangers-on, I found, who wanted her fortune—an Ensign of Foot—a Captain of Cavalry, with no income but his pay, and a white moustache—a parson without a living—and a landed gentleman with his estate mortgaged to the last acre of its value. It didn't take Phil Kelly long to go by such cattle as these. I pretty soon persuaded Polly that they were nothing more than a set of miserable fortune-hunters that wanted her money and not herself—and she sent them all packing in no time. When the coast was clear I made play myself, and perhaps you'll excuse me, gentlemen, from telling you how long it took me to become the accepted suitor of Miss Mary Flight. I don't wish to brag, and it's just likely you might think I *was* bragging if I mentioned the time."

"*Don't* mention it, pray," said Lorimer.

"Well, then," resumed the Captain, after another draught of champagne, "I was the accepted lover of the beautiful Polly. But Polly had a father, and, as I'm a living soul, gentlemen, this insolent old vagabond dared to oppose our union! He wanted all the particulars of *my* property; he wanted the dates of my commissions in the various armies in which I had the honor, and the glory too, to serve; he wanted the history of my family—I don't know what the fellow's impertinent curiosity *didn't* want."

"Monstrous!" cried Lavers, with mock horror; "of course, you didn't satisfy him on any point?"

"But I did," replied Kelly; "I offered him the satisfaction of a gentleman. I told him he might choose his own weapons—anything from a pistol to a handspike, and his own ground—anywhere from the Twelve Acres to the Boulogne Sands—

and what did the fellow do? He called me a murderer, and he locked me out of his house!"

"And so ended your adventure with Miss Flight, eh?" said Lorimer.

"Mr. Littlegood," replied the Captain gravely, "if anybody but a gentleman that I have such a respect for as yourself had made that remark, I should have requested him to name his friend and settle time, place, and weapons. Is it Phil Kelly that would be afraid of bolts and bars? Gentlemen, I made short work of it. I asked Polly if she loved me still. Polly said she did. I asked her if she'd bolt to Gretna Green. Polly said she'd like nothing better. I asked Polly if she'd any ready money; for, you see, gentlemen, I happened to be a little hard up for ready cash at the moment, all through that confounded miscreant of an agent of mine over the water, and Polly said she had £54. I told Polly to slip it into her pocket, and slip out of the house at ten p. m. that very night. Gentlemen, there was a train for Scotland at half-past ten, and Polly Flight and your humble servant travelled by it."

Here the Captain made a pause and looked about him.

"Go on," cried his friends.

The Captain took another good pull at the champagne, and proceeded:—

"We reached Scotland next morning, and I ordered breakfast at the hotel, and stepped out to look for the fellow that does the blacksmith's work. I found him, and told him to step up in about half-an-hour to the hotel, as I'd a job for him.

"'I suppose I musn't ask names, sir?' says the fellow.

"'I indeed, you may,' says I; 'my name's Captain Kelly, and the lady's name is Miss Mary Flight.'

"The fellow opened his eyes very wide and almost whistled.

"'What the devil do you mean by that?' says I.

"'No offence, Captain,' says he; 'but I thought—that is, I just fancied—'

"'What?' says I, in a rage, at the fellow's hesitating;

‘speak out like a man, or it’s every bone in your little carcase I’ll break.’

“‘I beg pardon, Captain, I didn’t mean no harm ; but I just thought I’d heard that lady’s name before.’

“‘How ? when ? where ? speak !’ says I ; and I flourished my stick about the chap’s head.

“‘I think, Captain—I think she’s been here before.’

“‘Been here before !’ cries I : ‘what the mischief do you mean, you little villain ?’ and I gave the stick another flourish that made the hair of his head flutter again.

“‘I think,’ says he, ‘she came to marry Colonel O’Keefe.’

“‘Came to marry Colonel O’Keefe !’ says I : ‘and why didn’t she marry him then ?’

“‘I believe the Colonel found there was something wrong—some mistake *about the money*,’ says the chap, looking awfully frightened at what he was telling me.

“‘Whew !’ says I, letting off a long breath, and beginning to feel rather queer. ‘I tell you what it is, my little man ; don’t you come up till you’re sent for, and here’s a couple of sovereigns to shut your mouth with.’

“‘All right, Captain,’ says the little villain, looking as knowing as possible.

“Well, gentleman, I need not tell you that what I heard flabbergasted me a little. So I walked to the hotel, and there was Polly waiting breakfast, and looking as fresh and as pretty as may be.

“‘I’m so glad you’ve come,’ says Polly ; and she gave me a kiss.

“‘Madam,’ said I, ‘I’ve a question to ask you. Have you ever been here before ?’

“‘Here ? I ?’ asked Polly, turning red and white by turns.

“‘Guilty, by St. Patrick !’ thought I.

“‘Yes, madam, *here*, and with Colonel O’Keefe, eh ?’

“‘Polly gave a great shriek and threw herself on the sofa, and kicked her legs about dreadfully. I sat quite still, because

I'd been a little used to those things, and I knew she'd come round when she found the hysterics didn't take with me.

"'Perhaps,' said I, 'you'll be good enough to tell me why Colonel O'Keefe didn't marry you.'

"'He was a villain,' cried Polly.

"'But what was the reason?' I asked.

"'He was a mercenary wretch,' cried Polly: 'somebody told him I'd got fifty thousand pounds, and when he found out, just as we were going to be married, that I had only five thousand, he refused to have me.'

"'Only *five* thousand!—is it only five thousand you have?' said I.

"'That's all,' said Polly.

"'Then O'Keefe was no fool,' says I: and when I said it, gentleman, Polly screamed again, and kicked her legs worse than ever.

"'And so, of course, you didn't marry her,' cried Lorimer.

"'Would you have me marry a woman that had run away with another man?' asked Kelly indignantly: "it wasn't the difference of the fortune——"

"'Of course not,' cried everybody. "But tell us—did you travel back to London together? What a pleasant journey it must have been!"

"'Gentleman, you'll hardly believe the trick that girl played me; but it's a fact. I mentioned that I had no ready money about me, and Polly *had*. Well, she went to her room—to mourn as I thought. So, after an hour or so, I rang the bell and asked if she could see me.

"'The lady's gone, sir,' said the servant.

"'Gone where?' I asked.

"'To London, sir, by the twelve o'clock train, sir—an hour ago, sir.'

"'The devil!' I exclaimed—'then I must be off too.'

"'Certainly, sir,' said the waiter—'there's a train at two, sir—shall I bring the bill, sir?'

“The bill !” By Jove, I’d given the last money I had to the deputy parson. I hadn’t a sixpence, *and Polly Flight knew it*. I positively, gentlemen, remained at that hotel for three weeks because I hadn’t money to take me away—and the worst of it was that the waiters got hold of the true story, and everybody was laughing at me behind my back.”

“And Polly ?” asked Lorimer.

“She was married to O’Shane before I got back to London : she ran away with *him*, but she took care to go another road, and O’Shane was safely tied up before he found the secret of ‘five’ instead of ‘fifty.’ Poor fellow !”

After this little story, cards were sent for, and dice, and more champagne. And play ran high, and the Count Roussillon and the Captain Kelly were extremely lucky, and Mr. Lorimer Littlegood very much the reverse : and so it happened that the two former gentlemen became possessed of little autographs of Lorimer’s acknowledging his indebtedness to the one in £800, and the other in £760. And the champagne, though iced, was strong, and Mr. Lorimer Littlegood is unable to state how or at what hour he got to bed that night ; but he *can* state that his head ached frightfully next day ; and if his heart ached also, why—serve him right !

CHAPTER VII.

MR. AND MRS. CRUMP.

EXTREMELY respectable people were Mr. and Mrs. Crump. They lived in a neat little house in a clean little street in the neighborhood of the Lower Road, Islington. The house had six feet of gravel and mould in front it, decorated with a laurel tree, and one or two not very healthy-looking plants, and dignified by the name of a garden. On the door of the house was a large brass-plate, with CRUMP engraved on it in imposing letters. There were buff-colored Venetian blinds to every window in the house, and as the blinds were generally down during the day and had red pulleys to them, and the bricks of the house were of the brightest description, and the mortar of the whitest and cleanest, Mr. and Mrs. Crump's dwelling-place, shining in the noonday sun, looked so remarkably like an enlarged doll's-house, that you would scarcely have been surprised if some giant had walked up to it and let down the whole of the front at once, and displayed the interior arrangements at a *coup d'œil*.

Mr. and Mrs. Crump were flower-makers—not horticulturists, but manufacturers of those pretty little gauze, gum and wire imitations of the "genuine article" that decorate the tresses and the bonnets of all the civilized of the fair sex, from Her Most Gracious Majesty down to Mary the cook, and Jemima the maid-of-all-work. Not that Mr. Crump made flowers with his own hands, nor did Mrs. Crump often condescend to manipulate the muslin, as she grandiloquently expressed it. But Mr. Crump undertook to supply the large west-end mil-

linery and flower shops with any quantity of flowers they might please to order of him ; and for this purpose Mrs. Crump had a number of young women and apprentices in her employ who were all day long hard at work with flimsy muslin of every color under heaven, and wire and gum and scissors—clipping, and folding, and twisting, and bending, and sticking—making roses, and violets, and white camelias, and lilies of the valley, and flowers of every name known to ordinarily informed botanists, and far beyond the knowledge of people so deficient in horticultural information as ourselves. The young women who worked for Mrs. Crump did not all live in Mrs. Crump's doll's-house, which would not have held a tithe of them. Most of them dwelt in out-of-the-way alleys and courts up ever so many flights of stairs, and in dismal little rooms looking out on chimney-pots, pigeons, and hungry cats. And most of them were quite as hungry as the hungriest of the cats, and longed for the wings of the pigeons (they would do as well as a dove's) to flee away and be at rest—"anywhere, anywhere out of the world," as poor Tom Hood sang: but poverty and hunger had put chains on their legs, and, instead of being like the pigeons, they were fixed to their roof-dwellings as much as the chimney-pots which formed their prospect.

Nevertheless, Mr. and Mrs. Crump were extremely respectable people. Mr. Crump drove his own four-wheeled chaise, with a steady-looking brown horse in it, rather the worse for an accident to his near fore-leg, and called on the first of west-end establishments. He was never known to fail in his engagements, however large might be the order, or however promptly he undertook to execute it. Perhaps some of the young women living up among the chimney-pots might, on some such occasions, have to sit up all night, or two or three nights, to complete the work: but what of that? Mr. Crump paid them: not one of them could allege that Mr. Crump had ever failed to do that, or to do it to the day. And if they found it hard to live and pay rent, and dress and look

tidy on four and sixpence a week, was that Mr. Crump's fault? He did not compel them to work for him—there was no slavery in free England—they accepted his offers voluntarily—they could give it up if they did not like it—it was a mere matter of agreement between master and laborer—it was all perfectly legitimate and straightforward. Mr. Crump only carried out the grand principle of commerce—especially of our enlightened modern commerce—the principle for which Messrs. Bobbin, Light, Phibson, and the rest of the Manchester school, will speechify with the eloquence of conviction—the principle of buying or manufacturing in the cheapest market, and selling in the dearest.

And Mrs. Crump: had she ever beaten an apprentice, or starved her, or ill-used her? Shame on the question! Mrs. Crump's voluminous and portly figure, in that grand black satin dress, and that extensive cap of many ribbons, forbade the idea of so atrocious a supposition. She taught her apprentices their business; she looked strictly after their morals; she took care that they should spend no time in idleness, which she justly regarded as the root of all evil: she considered that too much eating (which she expressly termed “stuffing themselves”) was bad for young women employed in sedentary occupations, and she firmly and judiciously limited the supply of mutton and potatoes accordingly. She also considered that too much lying in bed was apt to weaken the constitution, and therefore she curtailed the hours of sleep to a degree that left it impossible for her young charges to suffer from a superfluity of rest. In all her acts, Mrs. Crump was guided by principle—a principle which will be better understood as we become more intimately acquainted with Mrs. Crump's domestic arrangements.

“It's a queer sort of an affair altogether, *I* think,” observed Mrs. Crump to her husband, as they sat together in the best parlor of their doll's house, at a little round table, on which were the necessaries for tea

This best parlor, which was only used on extraordinary occasions, was decorated in a style which displayed both the taste and the pursuits of its owners. It had little flower-pots on the mantel-piece, and in the window, filled with artificial flowers. Against the walls were pinned similar ornaments, while the general tone of the paper, and paint, and curtains, and furniture, was what may be appropriately called "loud."

Two or three apprentices were in the room with Mr. and Mrs. Crump, and they were dressed in the best clothes they possessed, and looked as unlike themselves on ordinary occasions as a ballet dancer on the stage, compared with the dowdy little woman in a dirty shawl and pattens, that may be seen coming out of the stage door on a rainy night, reminding you of any one rather than the lovely Pettito who has been charming you for the last half hour.

Mr. and Mrs. Crump took no notice of the apprentices, who were busy at work, but talked as if they were not present, very much as ladies and gentlemen in better life do in the presence of their servants, as if those worthy people were both deaf and dumb.

"It's a queer sort of an affair altogether, *I think*," said Mrs. Crump.

Mr. Crump took a sip at his cup of tea, but only a cautious sip, for the tea was cruelly hot, and brought the tears into the eyes of the good man. It required something very hot, or very strong, indeed, to produce this effect on Mr. Crump.

"It ain't exactly in the ordinary way of things, certainly," he replied.

"I never heard the like of it," said Mrs. Crump; "a young girl that's a pretty girl, as you say—but you men think every little frump of a girl pretty—and a young gentleman that's tremendously rich and grand. And *he* wants to 'prentice her—what for, I should like to know? No good, I guess."

"But, my dear," remonstrated Mr. Crump, who, being a thin, light, active little man, with a large, robust, and com-

manding figure of a wife, had a due and natural respect for her ; “but, my dear, I told you that the gentleman had had the misfortune to run over her, and wants, naturally, to make some compensation for the accident.”

“Now, Mr. Crump, you don’t expect me to believe such a cock-and-a-bull story as that, do you ?” asked his wife. “You men fancy that we poor women are so easily imposed on, and so we are, goodness knows, when you practice your heartifices on us—but really, this is *too* ridiculous. Why couldn’t he give her a fi’ pound note, and have done with the hussy ? It’s *my* opinion he’s in love with her.”

“But, my dear, she’s only a child.”

“More shame for her—leastways, for *him*, I mean,” said Mrs. Crump, determinedly.

“There’s one thing, my dear,” said the practical Mr. Crump, in a whisper, so that the apprentices shouldn’t hear ; “it don’t much matter to us, so long as we get the premium—which is just about double what we generally *do* get,” and he rubbed his hands gleefully.

“Humph!” muttered Mrs. Crump ; “well, *I*’ll take care she plays none of her pranks here, at all events. She won’t get too much to eat, or too little to do, I fancy.”

“Ha ! ha ! very good,” chuckled Mr. Crump ; and the compliment of a laugh so pleased his wife that she evidently believed she had made a capital joke.

Just at this moment, a wild-looking servant girl pushed open the room-door in an excited and alarming way, and exclaimed—

“Please ’m, they’re come !”

Having delivered this sentence, she vanished, and immediately afterwards Mr. Lorimer Littlegood appeared at the door of the best parlor, with little Rose leaning on his arm, and looking pale, nervous, and delicate.

At the moment of their appearance, Mr. Crump, who prided himself on his good breeding—having graduated in the school of politeness as a linen-draper’s assistant in his younger days—

rose hastily from his seat, and proceeded to make a low and spasmodic bow. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Crump did not make due allowance for the propinquity of the tea-table, the edge of which coming into contact with the regions bordering on Mr. Crump's coat tails, the table was tilted up, and deposited a large supply of hot tea, milk, sugar, plates, cups and saucers, and bread and butter, into the lap of the astounded and scalded Mrs. Crump.

Mrs. Crump very naturally screamed; Mr. Crump very naturally turned hastily round, and, crying "My darling!" caught voluminous Mrs. Crump in his arms, who gave him a sly pinch somehow, that nearly made him roar with pain. Lorimer Littlegood burst out laughing; the apprentices giggled, but hid their faces; and poor little Rose was divided between fear and amusement.

It took some time to restore tranquillity in the best parlor. (Mr. Crump affirms that it took months to restore peace to his domestic hearth, for the best black satin was spoilt, and two of the best tea-cups smashed.)

"This is the gentleman, my dear—Mr. Littlegood, my dear," observed Mr. Crump nervously to his wife.

Mrs. Crump made a courtesy; but to attempt a smile was impossible, with the best black satin completely spoilt.

"I have brought my little charge, you see," said Lorimer, cheerfully. "She's very weak yet, Mrs. Crump; but your husband assures me you're a capital nurse."

Mrs. Crump made another courtesy, and looked patronizingly at Rose.

"Perhaps we had better arrange pecuniary matters alone, Mr. Crump," suggested Lorimer, who did not wish Rose to feel the obligation she was under by witnessing the handing over of the money.

"Certainly, sir," was the reply. "Will you oblige me by leaving us, my dear?" he said, turning to his wife.

Mrs. Crump made a tremendous bow (it wasn't a courtesy

this time), and taking Rose by the hand, and looking at her husband, with a side glance at her spoilt dress at the same time, she sailed out of the room in the most stately style. The apprentices went out in a heap.

"I have to hand you sixty pounds, Mr Crump," said Lorimer.

"Exactly so, sir."

"Here it is, then"—and Lorimer handed over six crisp ten pound notes; "and here is also the deed of apprenticeship for three years, which you see has been signed by Rose's father, and here is the counterpart, I think they call it, which requires *your* signature."

The matter was soon settled.

"Now, Mr. Crump, you will understand, that in placing Rose Bennoch in your charge, I rely on her being treated with every kindness and attention. If I thought otherwise, I would sacrifice fifty times what I have paid you to rescue her from suffering."

"She shall be treated quite as one of the family," said Mr. Crump, earnestly.

"Just so," replied Lorimer; "and if there is anything the matter with her, or if anything is wanted for her, I rely on you to apply to me without a moment's delay."

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Crump.

"Then we quite understand one another," said Lorimer, "and I may as well go. Will you be good enough to let me take leave of my little friend *alone*?"

Mr. Crump expressed compliance, and left the room. Immediately afterwards, Rose entered.

"Well, Rose, dear, are you satisfied?" asked Lorimer.

"Yes," said Rose, timidly.

"Poor child, how pale she looks! Mind you write to me often, Rose; and if you are not treated kindly, tell me at once, and I will fetch you away."

Rose hung her head, but did not answer.

"Do you think you shall like Mrs. Crump?" asked Lorimer.

Rose again said "Yes;" but very faintly indeed this time, and she burst into tears as soon as she had spoken the word.

"She's very weak yet," said Lorimer, thinking aloud; "but the change of air here will do her good. Good bye, my child—here is a little present as a remembrance—God bless you!" and, pressing a little purse into her hand (we may be sure it was well filled), he kissed her forehead, left the room hastily, run down stairs, jumped into his brougham, and, crying "Home!" was off at a full trot to London.

Rose had run to the window—Rose had watched him—had heard the word "Home"—had seen him wave his hand to her as he drove off; and then had sunk into a chair, and began to sob as if her death-knell had sounded.

"Hey-day! what's the matter here, I wonder?" cried Mrs. Crump, no longer in the grand black satin, but in a faded cotton gown, sailing into the room. "Crying, indeed! and what for, I should like to know? A pretty way to begin—we don't allow snivelling here, I can tell you—especially not for handsome young men."

When Rose heard the last words she raised her eyes suddenly, with a look of bewilderment. She clearly could not understand what Mrs. Crump meant. The inuendo would have been comprehensible enough at sixteen; but at thirteen, and to a child so utterly uneducated in the world's ways, it was puzzling in the extreme.

"Oh yes! very innocent, indeed," cried Mrs. Crump, with a sneer and a chuckle rolled into one. "We shall soon understand one another, though, I've no doubt."

Alas! it seemed very probable that they would; but whether the "understanding" was likely to contribute to Rose's happiness or improvement was another matter. Certain it is that the poor child went to bed that night with a bursting heart, and while trying in her unsophisticated way to reason herself

into the conviction that she ought to be happy—that she was removed from the scenes of violence, debauch, poverty, and want—that she was to learn a good and honest trade—that she had a kind protector, she sobbed herself into a fitful and dream-haunted slumber.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. WEAZEL MAKES A DISCOVERY.

WE hope the reader has not forgotten our sharp little friend, Mr. Weazel, who visited the Pecks on the night when Job had his first interview with his future master.

Mr. Weazel's home was an odd sort of place; and making all due allowances for the fact of Mr. Weazel being a bachelor, we cannot pronounce his dwelling-place even decently comfortable. He had a house all to himself, and no one to wait on him but a very small girl—so small, that a tall man might have been excused for walking over her without noticing her. She was always very hungry, too, but whether this arose from a peculiarly voracious appetite, or from the short commons supplied to her by Mr. Weazel, is in some degree a mystery. Weazel declared that she was the most frightful glutton ever known, and would eat her own grandmother if she got a chance; but Peg denied that she ever got a chance of any food at all that her master could possibly deprive her of. Two facts, however, are well established—that Peg once ate a piece of Weazel's soap (real yellow), and that a half-quartern loaf was expected by Weazel to satisfy himself and Peg for three days' meals.

Peg Todd (her name was almost as short as herself) was what the English law politely terms "*filia nullius*," that is, nobody's child. It may reasonably be presumed that she once had a father and a mother; but nobody knew who they were. As far as any living evidence extended, she was born on a door-step, in a thunder-storm, in a narrow alley, somewhere in

Whitechapel. In ancient days of poetical superstition, it would have been imagined that she was a daughter of the air, or a child of the fairies, or something of that kind; but in these dull, prosy days, the man who found her pronounced her a "poor little foundling," and intimated his belief, that her mother was no better than she ought to be, and that her father was about as good as her mother.

He was a kind-hearted old fellow that found her, and, although very poor, he neither tried to get the parish to take charge of her, nor to relieve himself of her in any other way. On the contrary, he formed the extraordinary, and rather rash resolve, of bringing her up himself. As far as kindness went, nothing was wanting on the old man's part; but a man of seventy is scarcely a proper nurse and tutor to an infant—so that Peg Todd grew up an odd child. The old man, whose name was Todd, and who christened his little charge Margaret, had a strong desire to leave her a fortune; but, as his sole means consisted of a small pension from his former employers in the city, whom he had served as light porter, he did not seem to have much chance of accomplishing his wish. He thought otherwise; and as the railway mania was at its height, he plunged into the stream of speculation like his betters, and, like many of them also, he was ruined. He borrowed money, in a small way, to be repaid out of his pension—the lender was our benevolent friend Weazel. At last he could not pay, and Weazel would give no more time: so Weazel took out execution against the old man's goods, entered his house, and seized his furniture. The old man was struck with apoplexy, brought on by excitement, and died. Weazel carried away the poor furniture, and with it little Peg Todd, appropriating both to his own use—the former to decorate his house, and the latter to be his white slave.

Peg did not cry much when the old man died; but Peg never laughed again. If there was any good in her it would have puzzled you to find it out; and yet there was not much

evil either, for she never lied or stole (except food when she was starving), and lying and stealing were the only vices she as yet knew anything about. That she hated Weazel with a ten-full-grown-female power was clear enough, and equally natural.

Mr. Weazel was at home smoking his pipe. It was almost the only luxury that Mr. Weazel ever allowed himself, except a half pint of porter to accompany the tobacco. Peg was in the back kitchen, her usual abiding-place, and Weazel in the front one; for being of an extremely economical turn of mind, he never used his parlor furniture when alone. It may be wondered why he did not let a part of his house, and thus put more money in his pocket; but men of penurious, scheming, and secret habits, generally like a house to themselves. They don't wish to be overlooked in any way. It was for a similar reason, no doubt, that Weazel kept Peg Todd in his service, because he regarded her as a stupid, ignorant, silent, unobservant child, who could not be a spy on him.

Mr. Weazel was smoking his pipe, and cogitating. Can anything be more conducive to calm reflection than the Virginian weed? Grievously to be pitied are they who know not, or cannot enjoy, the luxuries of a cigar. How soothing is its influence! how calmly beats the pulse as we loll in our easy chair, and, inhaling the fragrant vapour, send it forth again in light, fleecy clouds, and watch them floating around, and curling upwards, in a thousand fantastic forms! How the petty annoyances of the day seem to dissolve, the excitement of business to subside, the anger or the anxiety to die away, and calm and placid visions of ease and contentment to usurp their place! How differently we look at life, how differently we think of men at such a moment, than in the hurry and turmoil of the day! Oh, beneficent weed, that bringest such relief to the aching heart and the wearied brain, how much do we owe thee, and how little do they who revile thee know of thy **transcendent** virtues!

It must be confessed, however, that these effects were not produced upon Mr. Weazel by his pipe; but then Weazel's case is an exceptional one. If men who plot and scheme, and live by crooked means, and pass through life along its dirtiest roads, could but be brought to confess the truth, when they are nearing the goal to which we all hasten, by high-road or bye-road—the grave—they would tell us, that content and calm enjoyment, the only true pleasures, were always unknown to them. It is the very essence of plotting and scheming, that unquiet spirits should be engaged in them. And what happiness can the unquiet spirit know? Therefore, good reader, when you see the prosperous rogue and the rich schemer, and feel disposed to growl at having discovered the fallacy of the old schoolboy maxim, that “cheating never thrives,” take this consolation to your heart, that crooked ways may lead to wealth and pleasure, but not to content, which is *alone* happiness, as you will acknowledge when you have knocked about the world, “seeing life,” and have reached the shady side of thirty.

Weazel smoked like a man whose mind is not at ease: he took short, quick puffs for a minute or two together, and then ceased smoking till his pipe was almost out: then he began again in the same style, running his little finger viciously into the pipe-bowl, to its manifest danger of being burnt and blistered. Indeed, with all our love of smoking, this is a feat we never could accomplish unscorched, and so now never attempt it at all.

“It's very provoking,” thought Weazel, “very: here have I been tracing out this case for the last two years, and getting link by link of the evidence, and hard enough I've worked at it. Sometimes I've been almost tempted to throw it up altogether, when it's seemed so complicated and difficult, that I've been almost disheartened; but then it's such a fine stake to play for! Here have I been wriggling through the world for five and fifty years, and what have I made, after all? Why, if I could only get this one case complete, it would bring me

ten times what I've earned during the rest of my life. And, by degrees, I've cleared away almost every obstacle. It has cost me a great deal of time, and some money, too, and I'm not going to give it up now. No, no. But I'm regularly brought to a stand-still. Where can that fool be? Perhaps the beast is dead—he has n't been hanged, or I should have seen it in the paper. He may be dead, confound him: but that wouldn't matter so much, if I could find his heir, except that I might find the son more difficult to deal with than the father: I could do anything with him. It's of no use to advertise him in the newspapers, for a fellow like that never looks at one. And it might do harm, too; for that attorney chap is as sharp as old Nick, and as *he* has got some of the plunder, he'd be on the look out at once. It wouldn't do for him to know I couldn't produce the right man. Perhaps he knows where he is himself. Suppose I go to him, then, and pretend that *I* know, too: it may throw him off his guard, especially if I let him see that I know almost everything about the case. Hem! let me see."

And, so saying, Weazel fell into a brown study, and let out his pipe.

A loud single knock sounded on the street-door, and made Weazel start in his chair.

"Peg—Peg—you young wretch, don't you hear the knock?" cried he.

No answer came; so Weazel went into the back kitchen, where Peg Todd was too soundly sleeping to be disturbed by knocks, single or double. Weazel seized her by the shoulders, and tumbled her off the chair on which she was sitting coiled up. The child uttered a slight cry, but repressed it in a moment, as she saw her master, and stood rubbing her eyes with her dirty hands.

"There's a knock at the door—run and open it, you young devil's brat, you," he cried.

Peg went, but not hurriedly. She was never frightened either at Weazel's anger or his language. She opened the door, and

conducted down stairs our old friend Peck, Job's "big brother."

"Ah, my dear friend, I'm quite delighted to see you," said Weazel. "Confound him! what the deuce does he want?" he muttered to himself.

"Thought I'd give you a look up, as I was your way," answered Peck; "and we haven't seen you lately."

"You are very kind," said Weazel—"and it is a long time since we've met. Will you take a pipe?"

"Thank'ee," replied the other, "I've got one in my pocket." And, so saying, he produced a little black pipe, and filled it, and began to smoke.

"How's Mrs. P. and the little ones?" said Weazel.

"Pretty middling, thank'ee," said Peck.

"And how's Job?" asked Weazel; for Weazel was a man who considered that every one *might* be made serviceable to him, at some time or other, and so kept on good terms with as many people as he could.

"Oh, Job's all right."

"Does he like his place and his new master?"

"Yes; he likes 'em well enough; he gets good pay and good grub, and not too much work."

"That's well," said Weazel. "I've no doubt young Mr. Littlegood is a good hearted man."

"You may say that," replied Peck, "for he's proved it to my thinking."

"How so?"

"Why you see as he was driving his cabrioly lately, he had the misfortune to knock down a little girl, and one of her leg-bones was bruk, and Mr. Littlegood himself, he carried her into a shop, and he took her to the hospital on his own knees, and saw her well-cared for, and he's paid for everything; and, what's more, he's taken care of the girl, altogether, I'm told."

"Dear me!" said Weazel, "quite romantic, ain't it?"

"I don't know nothing about that, and never see anything of the sort, except Rosherville, which they calls so," said Peck;

but it's uncommon kind *I* think, and shows that Mr. Littlegood's a brick, and no mistake."

And, after this, for him, unusually long speech, Peck pulled away at his pipe, as if his life depended on puffing so many clouds in so many seconds.

"You're quite right," answered Weazel. "It was very noble, and he must feel a delightful satisfaction in his own conscience—there's nothing like *that*, Peck, nothing."

Weazel tried to look as if he were intimately acquainted with the sensation he referred to: but though poor Peck was not the brightest or most clear-sighted of mortals, he was not altogether deluded into the belief that Mr. Weazel tried to inspire.

"Was she very poorly off?" asked Weazel—not from curiosity, but from a wish to say something.

"Very," was the reply. "I'm told she was the daughter of a drunken blacksmith, who won't take the trouble to earn his own living—a regular brute they say he is."

"A drunken blacksmith!" said Weazel, catching at the words. "Do you happen to know the name?"

"Can't say I do," replied Peck.

"Where's the girl now?" asked Weazel, getting apparently interested in the case.

"Can't tell you that, neither," said Dick; "all I know is, that Job thinks she has been apprenticed somewhere; but he don't know where, for his master took her somewhere or other in a hired brougham, and Job wasn't with him; and, as it wasn't his business, I suppose he didn't trouble his head much about the matter."

Here Peck smoked away again vigorously, and Weazel sat scratching his head. It was evident that the little story he had heard had made some impression on his mind, and he seemed to fancy it might have a connexion with the scheme he was pursuing; but, after all, he was not a man to clutch at straws, and he was also averse to letting people know that anything

out of the ordinary way was passing in his mind. So he tried to talk in his usual style on different subjects with Peck, but did not succeed very well, which was of no great consequence with so silent a man as his guest.

At length, as the latter rose to depart, Weazel determined to make one more effort to elicit what he wished to discover.

"Do you, know, Peck," he said, "that oddly enough, I can't help fancying I know something about the family of the poor girl you mentioned? You're sure you don't know her name?"

"No," replied Peck; "though I heard it too."

"What was it like?" asked the other.

"Let me see—Ben—Ben—Bennett; no, it wasn't Bennett, neither."

"Was it Bennoch?" asked Weazel.

"That's it—that's it," replied Peck.

"Ah, thank ye," said Weazel, shaking hands with Peck, and looking as calm as he could. Peck bade him good night, and went up stairs with Peg (into whose hand he slipped a sixpence, strongly suspecting she wanted food) and was let out.

As soon as the street door banged, Weazel sprung up, and actually began to cut capers like a mad dancing master, to the intense surprise of Peg Todd, who stood at the kitchen door, holding a rushlight in her hand.

"May I go to bed?" asked Peg, when Weazel, conscious of her presence, ceased his saltatory exercise.

"You may go to ——; yes, be off," he cried; and the girl walked away quietly.

"What a piece of luck!" exclaimed Weazel: "found him at last! at least I soon shall. Bennoch—drunken blacksmith—won't get his living; of course it's he—of course it is. My fortune's made."

CHAPTER IX.

LORIMER CALLS IN THE AID OF CAPTAIN KELLY.

A MAN with several hundreds a year, certain income, has not much trouble in raising a little extra money. When Lorimer was reminded of the two little I O U's he had given to the Count and Captain Kelly, he made the unpleasant discovery that the balance at his banker's was so small as to be almost a fractional one. But a request that he might overdraw his account till he could get fresh remittances from his solicitor and agent, was immediately complied with by the accommodating banker to whom he made it. This facility of obtaining ready cash was rather unfortunate for him, as it prevented him from troubling his head about money matters at all. A difficulty of "raising the wind" is an excellent check on extravagance, because it forces a man to look more or less keenly at the state of his affairs. So long as signing your name to a cheque, or across a piece of stamped paper, produces an immediate supply of coin, so long is reflection as to ways and means postponed ; but the first notice of "no effects," or the first polite refusal to "do" the bit of stamped paper, suggests the idea that a screw is loose somewhere, and that however satisfactory may be the state of the money market in the city (and we have always observed that it *is* satisfactory there at the time our own pockets are lightest), it is evident that *our* little money market is becoming tight. Thereupon, we ask ourselves what we really want and cannot do without, postponing to an indefinite period a thousand little things that we fancied we needed but that we can remarkably well dispense with if we try : we

also inquire what we did with that last hundred pounds we received ; and, although we cannot account for the disbursement of much more than half of it, still, even in that half, we recollect a great many little items that can by no means be pronounced necessities of life. Perhaps we make a vow to be more economical, and we keep it—for a fortnight. No matter ; the difficulty and the reflection have done us good by reminding us that our means are far from inexhaustible, and that it may be still less easy to “raise the wind” next time than it has been this. Lorimer’s warning did not come yet : he paid his I O U’s, wrote to Bosher for a fresh supply of money, and troubled his head no more about the matter.

It was the opinion of a great many people, and especially of ladies who had grown-up daughters, that Lorimer Littlegood ought to marry. A man of his fortune might select almost any young lady he pleased from a certain rank of life ; and it would settle him, and be so far more respectable than a bachelor’s life : and they were sure that he was naturally of a most domestic nature, and would make the best and most contented of husbands. How excellently our friends can always carve out our future for us ! and yet how perversely it happens that our own notions as to what we ought to do are nearly always at variance with those of our kind friends. To be sure, a man may not be a good judge of his own case, and it is possible that our kind friends may see the way clearly enough for us, while to our own visions, the path is obscure ; but, after all, we mostly like to steer our own course, and take the chance of getting on the rocks rather than entrust the rudder of our happiness to the hands of others. Was ever man possessed of a few hundreds or thousands, but that dozens of kind friends could point out exactly what he ought to do with it ? Was ever widower known who had not plenty of relations and friends that were quite determined on getting him married again, and perfectly ready to suggest exactly the sort of wife he should take—if not, indeed, to name the identical lady to be thus honored ? Was

ever bachelor existent—with a well-lined pocket—who was not surrounded by harpy friends, in female form, ready to snap him up for themselves, their daughters, or their sisters?

Lorimer Littlegood, Esq., informed everybody that he was not a marrying man, that he intended to see life—and see it in a way that precluded all idea of matrimony. Undoubtedly such was his intention; but who that had a daughter to marry cared about such protestations? They knew perfectly well that from Benedick downwards, they who have first scoffed at matrimony have often plunged most suddenly and unexpectedly into it; and if Mr. Littlegood did *mean* to be single, still it was quite possible that Jemima's teeth, or Matilda's hair, or Jane's voice, or Maria's figure, or Lucy's complexion, might turn him aside from his purpose, and lead him captive—another victim to feminine artifices or attractions. Therefore was Lorimer's table daily covered with little notes of every hue and shape—some pink, pressing, private, and friendly—some white, formal, enveloped, and “requesting the honor”—some blue, three-cornered, hasty, and confidential—but all having the same object in view.

Lorimer found these things somewhat of a bore, and had serious thoughts of engaging a secretary to open and reply to them, as the doing so would occupy two-thirds of any ordinary mortal's time. But, by degrees, estimating them at their proper value, he felt quite sure that all the friendship, confidence, affection, and anxiety contained in them were not, together, worth the salary of the most moderate of secretaries; so he got into a habit of tossing them aside unanswered, and picking out an invitation, here and there, to accept.

There was one house, however, at which he was a constant visitor—that of the Stanleys—wherein dwelt the young lady concerning whom he wrote to his sister. For a man who had determined *not* to marry, Lorimer's continual calls at this house were, to say the least, rather noticeable. At least two evenings in every week he passed there, and this was no small

proportion of time for a young gentleman of his multifarious engagements and pursuits. But, then, the Stanleys were very unaffected people, and very clever, and amusing, and easy-mannered—in fact, just what people should be who venture to give, and expect you to accept, general invitations, which we regard as a gross piece of impertinence on the part of the slow, stupid, jog-trot portion of the community, though charming enough when coming from people like the Stanleys.

Some persons insinuated that Mrs. Stanley had a taste for match-making. Very likely she had ; but, with three daughters, how could she be otherwise ? Where is the mama, similarly circumstanced, who has not a similar taste ? "Young ravens must have food," says ancient Pistol. "Young ladies must have husbands," say modern mamas ; and the necessity is as apparent in the one case as the other. A mother, with a taste for match-making, is, after all, only a mother with strong maternal instincts, and, therefore, an object of respect rather than of censure.

As Lorimer was turning over, and tossing aside, the various and many-shaped notes on his breakfast table one morning, he came upon one in the well-known hand-writing of Mrs. Stanley ; but it was not pink or blue, three-cornered, twisted, or cocked-hat shape, as usual. On the contrary, it was rather business-like in appearance, being enclosed in a full letter-size envelope, and sealed with a large impression. He twisted it about, as people always do, wondering what the contents could be, instead of opening it to ascertain. At length he broke the seal, and read as follows :—

" MY DEAR MR. LITTLEGOOD,

" It is now some time that we have enjoyed the pleasure of your society, and, I trust I may add, your friendship. We have been indebted to your conversation and your musical talents for many delightful evenings, and I flattered myself that more than a mere acquaintanceship was established between us. It

is true that I had occasionally the fear, that censorious people might attribute my encouragement of your visits here to other than *disinterested* and mere *friendly* motives; but knowing that such insinuations will always be made against mothers who have daughters of a certain age, and feeling *perfectly innocent*, in my own heart, I determined to disregard the ill-natured remarks that might be made. I knew that you entertained no feelings beyond those of *friendship* for my daughters, and that you were not likely to experience any others, with your peculiar views of life, and surrounded, as you are, by a thousand things and people more attractive than my dear girls. But, my dear sir, I was not prepared to hear that, while visiting our house, and partaking of such poor hospitality as we could offer, you were making a sport and a bye-word of my daughter's name among your own gay associates. Even now I can *scarcely credit* that you have done so: at the same time, I think it justice to show you the enclosed piece of paper. It is part of a letter written by a gentleman, well known to you, to another gentleman, who thought it only right to let me see it. I have torn away both the signature and the address; but I sincerely hope I may receive your assurance that the expressions attributed to you were not really such as you used. Requesting your early and candid reply to this,

“I remain,

“Yours, sincerely,

“ELIZABETH STANLEY.”

The enclosure was a strip of paper (part of a letter, as Mrs. Stanley had stated), and contained these words:—

“Littlegood did not join us. He tells us he was amusing himself with cunning little Nelly Stanley, and her ‘clever’ mamma—good sport, no doubt.”

“The devil take the fellow!” exclaimed Lorimer, in a rage. “I swear I never said such a thing in my life: if there’s any girl I have respect for, more than another it’s Miss Stanley.

Let me see—whose is the handwriting? I know it—and yet—yes—it's that brute Lavers's. I never have liked that fellow; and now I see what a dangerous character he is. Besides, this is not the first time he has spoken disrespectfully of the same lady. I'll settle accounts with him now—hang the fellow."

"My dear boy, are you walking for a wager?" asked Captain Kelly, entering the room, up and down which Lorimer was pacing and chafing in true theatrical style.

"Ah, Kelly!—the very man—I'm very glad you've come."

"What is it, me dear fellow?" cried the captain, scenting a row afar off, and rejoicing accordingly, like all his countrymen, at such a luxury.

"There!" said Lorimer, throwing down the piece of letter supposed to be written by Lavers. "Whose writing is that?"

"I take it, it's our skinny friend Lavers's," was the reply.

"Exactly so," said Lorimer: "and what do you think of it?"

Now the captain, not being a delicately sensitive man regarding a young lady's name, would never have discovered anything wrong in the letter of his own accord; but perceiving that Lorimer was very indignant, he of course thought it right to affect a similar sentiment.

"Bedad, it's not the thing, then," said he.

"He shall suffer for it," cried Lorimer.

"Shootin's too good for him," chimed in the captain.

"You must call on him for me, captain," said Lorimer.

"Won't I then?" cried Captain Kelly, approaching the highest state of felicity, now that the prospect of a row was becoming still clearer.

"You must ask him if he *did* write it, you know," remarked Lorimer.

"Sure I'll ask him, and he'll answer too, I'll warrant."

"If he admits it, be good enough to remonstrate with him on the impropriety of using my name in such a manner, and still more the young lady's."

"I'll remonstrate," said the captain, but not liking such a peaceful word by any means.

"You see," observed Lorimer, "that he may say that the letter was merely a private one from one friend to another, and that he has no right to be called on to explain anything in such a communication. But I shall not stand such an excuse—"

"Of course you won't," cried Kelly; "of course not, my boy. Your honor's safe with me, and I'll see you through the affair like a gentleman, dead or alive."

"You're very obliging," said Lorimer, smiling; "but understand, my dear Kelly, that if Mr. Lavers can be induced to apologize, and also to assure Mrs. Stanley that the expressions he attributes to me were not really used by me, I think this will be by far the best course for all parties. I don't think, between ourselves, that Master Lavers would much like fighting. I confess that I am not fond of duels myself, and by no means approve them; besides which, I am perfectly convinced that no lady about whom a duel is fought, for any earthly cause, comes out quite unscathed in reputation. Therefore, pray understand that I wish to convey a remonstrance, and to appeal to Mr. Lavers's feelings as a gentleman; and I trust they will prompt him to pursue the right course. If they do not, then of course there is but one alternative open to us—"

"Pistols and coffee," said the captain, his mouth watering with delight at the very thought of those luxuries, which are getting so rare now-a-days.

"I suppose so," said Lorimer, smiling again: "but you understand my wishes, I think."

"Never fear: I understand all about it. I'll just take and break every bone—I mean I'll remonstrate with Mr. Lavers like a gentleman, my boy. Good bye."

And Captain Kelly rushed away in a great hurry, leaving Lorimer to write to Mrs. Stanley, and to ask himself afterwards, whether the redoubtable captain was really "the very man he wanted." He had slight misgivings on the point now.

CHAPTER X.

ROSE RECEIVES A MORNING CALL.

ROSE BENNOCH was becoming initiated into the peculiarities of Mr. and Mrs. Crump's establishment. It was not the most agreeable household in the kingdom, perhaps, but Rose had not been accustomed to one better regulated.

At six o'clock every morning, Mrs. Crump, in a costume that no gentleman but her husband ought to know anything about, and which we will not, therefore, hint at—further than to mention that it comprised a cap with enormous limp, wavy frills round it—used to enter the room where Rose and three other apprentices were sleeping, and, making sharp and savage thrusts at the bedclothes with her knuckles, would awaken the slumberers with cries of—"Get up with you, you lazy sluts; I suppose you want to go on snoring away all day." And Mrs. Crump would never leave the room till all four apprentices were quite out of bed, when she would inform them, that "if they did not make precious good haste, they should have no breakfast at all."

At half past six the poor girls were hard at work at the muslin and the wire, and the other materials for flower making. They had plenty to say to one another, though they were obliged to talk in sly whispers; for if Mrs. Crump heard either of their voices, she would rush out of the room and declare that they were a set of "idle, chattering, good-for-nothing minxes, and she'd stop their dinners, that she would." The apprentices knew that these were no idle threats; for nothing gave Mrs. Crump greater satisfaction than to put one

of the girls on short commons; it was a capital punishment, and a profitable one to her own pocket. Short commons! To tell the truth, they never had anything else; for a slice of bread with a fiction of butter, and palely-colored milk and water, denominated tea, for breakfast, a slice of meat and a potato at dinner, and another slice of bread in the evening, which constituted each girl's daily allowance, could scarcely be called a very full supply of food for hard-working, growing girls.

At eight o'clock, the breakfast was served—that is to say, a mug of the fictitious tea and a slice of the bread and butter was placed before each apprentice, with an injunction to be quick over it. In a quarter of an hour, they were at work again till one o'clock, when they were called into another room, and allowed twenty minutes to dispose of their dinner. At work again till six, when the breakfast scene of the morning was repeated; and then at work again till nine or ten at night. By this economy of time, and these benevolent and judicious arrangements, Mrs. Crump got about fourteen hours' work every day out of her apprentices, and took great credit for her own kindness and humanity in not making it eighteen hours instead. The Ten Hours' Act, indeed! thought Mrs. Crump—it's nothing but an encouragement to idleness: thank goodness, they couldn't interfere with private establishments like her's.

And yet there were those who envied Mrs. Crump's apprentices, and wished they could change places with them. These were the girls who worked at their own homes for Mr. and Mrs. Crump. The apprentices might grumble at the paucity of the butter on their slices of bread, and the smallness of their allowance of meat, but the poor work-girls in their garrets, often found it hard to get a slice of bread at all, and scarcely ever, in their wildest aspirations, thought of meat.

Yet they had their liberty, and that was something—nay, it was a great deal; for although it sounds very well to say

that those who must work night and day, or starve, are slaves in the worst sense,—that liberty is but a name when it does not give you sufficient food and rest—that hunger is a worse tyrant than any human one—that a sufficiency of meat and drink, a good bed to lie on, even though they are accompanied with personal restraint, compensate fully for perfect freedom with griping poverty—though all this sounds well and reads well, and often carries conviction to good heads and gentle hearts, yet, after all, there is not one of us, free born and ever so little enlightened, that would not gladly exchange all the material advantages of servitude for liberty. Is liberty, then, a mere phantom, when she is attended with none of the wealth, none of the comforts of life? No: rather she is a goddess, whose divinity we all worship, not because she brings us solid worldly advantages, but because she *is* divine, and some kindred element of our own souls draws us irresistibly towards her.

And thus, while the poor work-girls, in their garrets up among the chimney pots, envied the apprentices in Mrs. Crump's establishment, the latter in turn longed for the time when they should be free from harsh restraint and ill-usage, and at liberty to earn their meagre meals in their own little chambers.

It is strange, but true, that of all the apprentices, poor little Rose suffered most under the domestic tyranny of Mrs. Crump. She had known but little kindness, or felt but little happiness, in her own wretched home; but yet, crouching down in her little dark corner with her one book, and dreaming of scenes, and people, and ways of life she might never become personally acquainted with, she had tasted a sort of freedom from which she was here debarred. But this was not all: for between her life in the miserable court where her drunken father and scolding mother dragged out their squabbling existence, had come an interval of calm and delight, when lying in the hospital and tended with every care, and

daily visited by at least one kind, sympathizing friend, a gleam of sunshine had broken in upon the poor child's vision—sunshine so bright that she scarcely, at first, believed in its beauty—happiness so keen as to be almost painful in its very intensity. And now the contrast! Instead of the gentle care and the soothing voices around her; instead of the smiling look of inquiry of her daily visitor, the warm pressure of her little hand, and the assurance that all would henceforth be well with her, and she should never want aught that friends could provide,—there was callous indifference to her sufferings; harsh, scolding voices reproving the errors of her ignorance, the ready blow to chastise her slightest fault, real or imaginary, and the denial of all that she was in justice entitled to.

How she thought of the kind, generous, noble, and handsome stranger that had befriended her! How in her childish heart she worshipped his name, and prayed for him, and sobbed herself to sleep, thinking of every word of gentleness and comfort he had spoken to her, and comparing all with the sordid cruelty she now experienced. Poor little Rose!

She was a favorite with her fellow apprentices, though they pronounced her an odd, "old-fashioned," strange little creature. She did not laugh as much as they did—for in spite of their short-commons, and hard work, and little rest, the poor apprentices had many a little sly joke and merry laugh among themselves—but she was not morose, and she was very grateful for any little kindness they showed her, or any assistance they gave her. And they also made her their confidante. Patty Jenkins, who would not have dropped the slightest hint to one of her other companions about the butcher's young man who had laid successful siege to her affections, and who had actually taken her to a promenade at Cremorne Gardens one Sunday afternoon—Patty told little Rose all about it, and made Rose, who was sympathetic, quite interested in this desperate case of mutual affection and hazy love-prospects. Not that Rose understood many of

Patty's expressions, or was old enough to enter fully into all the romance of the tender passion; but Rose thought that if the butcher's young man, who was described to her as a kind of conglomerate of a hero and a "swell" rolled into one, was at all like Lorimer Littlegood in person and attributes, it must be very natural in Patty to feel intensely fond of him. And when she asked Patty if the butcher's young man had brought her there, and Patty laughed, and said she should think not indeed, but quite the other thing, for he wanted to take her away with all his might, Rose found that her knowledge of life was very limited after all—she could not understand the difference of her own position from that of the others around her, and with characteristic reserve she asked no questions, but retired within herself to brood over her own thoughts, and draw pictures of life utterly unlike the reality, just as she had done in the dark little corner at home, over her book with the two old engravings.

One day, as Rose and the three other apprentices were hard at work at the flowers, only talking in low whispers, a double-knock was heard at the street door; and about five minutes afterwards, Mrs. Crump sailed into the room, looking more than usually disposed to find fault with everybody.

"Chattering away as usual, you idle hussies: a precious bad bargain I've made with all of you: what with your laziness and your appetites, you're ruining me every day, that you are. And now here's a fine to-do, miss, with *you*," she said, turning to Rose,—"so you're to have visitors coming to see you, are you?"

Rose started at the word, and thought it must be Lorimer. Mrs. Crump guessed her thoughts in a moment.

"Oh no, miss, it isn't *him*—quite a different sort of person, I can assure you. He's old enough to be your father, or I should n't let you see him."

At the word "father," Rose trembled and looked down.

"Is it my father, ma'am?" she asked, dreading the reply.

"Your father! No, indeed. I didn't know you'd got one, goodness knows," said Mrs. Crump, with a sneer. "There, take yourself down stairs into the front room, and be quick back, or it'll be the worse for you."

Rose did as she was told, wondering who could have come to see her, and unable to think of any friend in the world but Lorimer.

When she entered the parlor, she saw certainly a very different looking man from Mr. Lorimer Littlegood; for her present visitor was a little, sharp-featured, cunning-looking man, rather seedily dressed, by no means young, and not prepossessing in any way.

"Ah, my dear, how do you do?" he said, evidently meaning to be extremely agreeable. "So you're Miss Bennoch—Miss Rose Bennoch—are you? And a pretty little Rose you are, too—ha! ha!" And he finished with a little, short, double-knock laugh, intended to be friendly and encouraging, but very much the reverse in effect.

"Sit down, my dear, sit down," he continued; and Rose sat down, staring at the man, and wondering who he could be, and what had brought him to see her.

"You don't know me, do you?" the man went on: "but I'm a very old friend of your dear father's—a very old one. He and I have known one another these thirty years."

If the visitor intended to recommend himself to Rose by this declaration, he had certainly made a great mistake; for Rose's experience of all her father's intimate friends was by no means favorable to her high appreciation of their moral characters.

"Did you ever hear your father mention Mr. Weazel, my dear? because that's me."

Rose said "No—she didn't remember;" and Mr. Weazel expressed his opinion that that was remarkably odd, because he had been one of Mr. William Bennoch's oldest and most intimate friends.

"And how *is* your father, my dear?" continued Mr. Weazel, in the same friendly tone, and looking at Rose much in the style in which a cobra-capello may be supposed to gaze on a poor little bird it is trying to fascinate into its open jaws.

"I don't know sir; I haven't seen him for a long time," answered Rose.

"Ah! he lives a long way from here, certainly," said Weazel: "I suppose he can't find time to come so far, eh?"

"No," said Rose tremulously, and not knowing whether she was telling the truth.

"I must persuade him to come and see you, though, my dear; he really ought, now and then."

"Pray don't sir; pray don't," cried Rose, urgently; and then she colored and felt very wretched at what she had said, but still could not wish it unsaid.

"Why, don't you like to see your father, my dear?" asked Weazel, with a horrid grin, and knowing perfectly well the reason of the child's fear.

"Yes sir; only—that is—Mrs. Crump doesn't like me to have visitors," stammered Rose, utterly unconscious, in her confusion, of the strong hint she was giving Weazel to walk off.

"Ain't she very kind then, my dear?" he asked with the cobra-capello look again.

"Ye-e-e-s," faltered Rose.

"I'm sure you look very well," said Weazel, patronisingly; "and it was very kind of Mr. Littlegood to bring you here."

"Do you know him, sir?" asked Rose, startled at the name into a deep interest.

"Oh, yes—that is—oh, yes—a very nice young man indeed; very good man, don't you think so, my dear?"

"Yes," said Rose; but this time she spoke quietly, and with reserve of manner, for something told her childish mind that this man was not one to whom to talk of Lorimer. She did not believe that Lorimer knew him.

"By-the-bye, my dear," said Weazel, after a pause; "I've lost your father's address; let me see, he lives at——"

He hesitated, and Rose at once said—

"No. 6 Laurel Court, Stag Street, Lambeth."

"Ah, to be sure," said Weazel, repeating it after her; "that's it; I'd quite forgotten it for the moment. Well, my dear, perhaps I'd better not keep you any longer; good bye; here's a little keepsake," and he handed Rose a sixpence.

"No, thank you, sir; I don't want it, I thank you sir," and she colored so that Weazel, wonderful to relate, felt a little uncomfortable himself. "But, please, sir, will you be so kind as not—not—not to say anything about *me*, sir, to father?"

Weazel put on a look of intensely cunning inquiry.

"Why, doesn't he know?"

"Mother does, sir; mother does," said Rose, hastily; and as Weazel still stared at her, she burst out crying.

"Don't cry, my dear; good bye, my dear," said Weazel; "don't fear, I won't say anything at all."

And Weazel left the room and the house, chuckling at his own cleverness in getting the address out of Rose. Like many another cunning fellow who never can believe that the straight open road is the nearest, he had wasted his time; for if he had simply asked the one question alone, Rose would have answered it at once, utterly unconscious of any reasons for concealing the fact.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. WEAZEL RENEWS AN OLD FRIENDSHIP.

IF Fortune is so fickle a goddess that she will not always smile on those who most assiduously court her favor, she could scarcely be expected to show much care for a gentleman of such extremely irregular habits as staggering Bill. And here we may remark that in calling Mr. Bill Bennoch a man of "irregular" habits, we have only followed the conventional phrase, though we are convinced of its injustice in point of fact. Those who are called irregular people are generally the most regular; a regular drunkard, a regular roué, a regular cheat, a regular brute, a regular fool, all these people (and a dozen other instances might be given) are those who are otherwise called people of irregular lives. The truth is, that the refinement of civilization will not allow us to call men and things by their right names, and so we invent such a comparatively inoffensive phrase as "irregular habits" to designate half the vices under the sun.

Bill Bennoch was dreadfully out of luck.

For some days he had positively been without the minutest coin of the realm, and had further used up his "tick" at every public-house he frequented; he had tried every "dodge" he had heard of, or could invent, to raise a fresh supply of liquor, but at length without effect. So low was he reduced, to such absolute want had he reached, that he was positively obliged to work. It happened that Bill could always get work when he wanted it, for not only was he a great powerfully-built fellow, but he was also a very skilful man at his craft. This is a

peculiarity observable in most drunkards: we don't know whether the matter has ever been specially noted, or its reasons inquired into, and we have not time to enlarge on the subject now; but it is certainly true that most handicraftsmen who take to drinking are pronounced to be remarkably clever at their calling while at labor.

Very hungry, therefore, and especially very thirsty, Bill had taken himself off one day from Laurel Court to a blacksmith's in the neighborhood, when Mr. Weazel called to inquire after him. Mrs. Bennoch, who was at home, and saw that Weazel did not look like a pot-companion of her husband, told him where the latter could be found. Weazel followed her directions, and reached the blacksmith's forge.

It was one o'clock, and the men had all gone to dinner, all but Bill Bennoch, who had no dinner to go to, and no money to buy one with. So Bill sat himself down on the ground, and thought how much he should enjoy a pot of good beer.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! there you are, eh?" cried a voice, interrupting Bill's busy visions; and as Bill looked towards the open doorway, he saw a sharp-featured little man standing and nodding to him.

"Who are you, and what are you grinning at?" growled Bill, who was in one of his sulkiest moods.

"What! don't you know your old friend, Bill?" cried the stranger.

"If you chaffs *me*," answered Bill, "you'll just get this hammer over your head, that's all. I reckon it won't come very light when Bill Bennoch uses it."

"But I'm not chaffing you, my dear sir, not a bit," said the other in a tone of remonstrance; "I'm your old friend, Weazel, don't you recollect me?"

"Who?" asked Bill, with a kind of hazy idea that he had heard the name.

"Weazel—Weazel—little Tom Weazel, that you used to like so much," answered the other.

"Will you stand anything? that's the point," said Bill, with an eye to *his* main chance.

"Of course I will; anything you please, my good friend."

"Oh, it's all right then," said Bill; "come in, *I* know you well enough. Every man's my friend as will stand a pot."

"Where shall I get it?" asked Weazel, thinking it better to humor his friend at once.

"Over the way," said Bill; "no; stay, hand us the money, let me get it; it'll do me good, and establish a 'tick' for me. I won't drink any till I bring it in here, honor bright."

Weazel handed Bill half a crown, and Bill went and got a pot of porter, but forgot to return the change—a fact which Weazel did not think proper to notice.

"Sit down there by the bellows," said Bill; "I like the ground best for myself; can't tumble from there;" and he placed himself on the ground, with his back to the brickwork of the furnace, and deposited the pewter pot on the anvil, after having first taken a good draught at its contents.

"Now, what's up?" asked Bill.

"What do you mean, my good friend?"

"I say, what's up?" repeated Bill, forcibly; "you don't suppose I'm so green as to suppose you're come here for the pleasure of my society, do you? There's something up, I know; what is it?"

"Really, Bennoch, you seem to forget what intimate friends we used to be; and surely it's not very extraordinary that I should like to have a chat with you again."

"Now just stow that humbug, will you?" said Bill; "'cause it won't take. I do remember you now, Master Weazel; and I recollect that you was always as cunning as a fox, and didn't care for any man except for what you could get out of him. I recollect you used to lend me money, so long as there was any chance of my paying it back again, and precious good interest you used to charge. I recollect you'd clean your best friend's pocket out, by hook or by crook, and lock him up in quod

afterwards, as cool as a cucumber. I recollect you'd encourage men to drink, and take good care not to touch the liquor yourself, and then you'd get 'em to sign things, which somehow always ruined 'em. I recollect you were the coolest, craftiest little villain that ever lived, but hadn't no more pluck than a cat; there now, I recollect all that (though I shan't by-and-bye, mayhap), and so you see I *do* know you, Mr. Weazel."

During this recountal of his virtues, Mr. Weazel had sat still, looking as pale as a ghost, and grinning horribly. He would have liked to strangle the speaker, no doubt; but Bill had formed a perfectly correct idea of his courage, or rather his want of it, and Bill was himself strong enough to have settled Weazel with a single blow.

"My dear friend, you are very harsh in your judgment of me," said Weazel, in a hissing, sneaking tone of voice: "I assure you that I've come here entirely for your good, and because I think I can do you a great piece of service."

"Which won't be any money in *your* pocket, in course," suggested Bill.

"I don't say that; I don't say that," replied Weazel, with an air of perfect candor. "I have no doubt that if I helped you to a fortune of two or three thousand a year, you'd reward me handsomely."

"A fortune of what?" asked Bill.

"Two or three thousand a year," said Weazel, decidedly; "I've no doubt it's quite that; and I've no doubt I shall be quite able to get it for you in time."

"Go on," said Bill, as the other paused for a moment; "but stay a bit; this beer would be all the better for a drop of gin in it: you haven't got another half crown about you, have you?"

Weazel produced it, and Bill departed for a bottle of gin, with which he soon returned, and setting himself down on the ground, he bade Weazel "fire away again."

"You recollect your father, don't you?" asked Weazel

Bill raised himself up a bit, and turned round to stare at the questioner.

"Yes, I do," he replied, settling back again into his former position; "but I'll tell you what it is; if you want to ask me about what I recollect, you'd better do it all at once, because I shan't recollect anything soon, I can tell you," and he pointed to the gin bottle; "and it's a deal pleasanter not to; I hate recollecting."

"Well," said Weazel, smiling, "you must remember that he was a man of very good property, indeed, for he kept as handsome an establishment as a gentleman need wish to have, and he gave you a good education to——"

"A deal of good it's done me," growled Bill, who, to say truth, often showed signs of having been better educated in his youth than others of his class, though he had by degrees fallen into many of their vulgarities of expression.

"At all events, he was rich," said Weazel.

"I don't know about that," replied Bill. "I was only fourteen when he died, and there wasn't a halfpenny for me then, and so I was turned adrift to shift for myself, and a pretty nice shift I've made of it."

"Now that's just the point," said Weazel; "everybody thought your father was rich, and yet when he died there was nothing apparently left. He died without a will, and it turned out that a certain lawyer claimed mortgages on every atom of his property to more than its full value, so that even his furniture and plate were sold to make up the deficiency, as he had given bonds and personal securities besides."

"Go on," growled Bill, who was listening and half understanding, but was getting gradually heavy-headed.

"It was all a swindle," cried Weazel, in a shrill voice, and with great energy.

"What was?" asked Bill, wandering.

"The securities, confound you!" cried Weazel, indignant at

the other's want of interest, and forgetting his fear in the excitement of the moment.

" Halloa ! " cried Bill, " who are you confounding ? " and he seized the pewter pot to hurl it at Weazel's head, but fortunately for that gentleman the pot had liquor in it, and Bill was not the man to waste it, so he put it to his lips instead, and set it down again on the anvil, with an injunction to Weazel to " mind what he was after, or he'd get his head broken, that was all."

" I beg your pardon, " said Weazel, " but do try and attend to me ; I tell you that I have for years and years been looking into this case, and I'm quite convinced that nearly every one of those mortgage deeds were either forgeries altogether, or had been signed by your father in ignorance of what he was signing. Do you recollect your mother ? " asked Weazel, suddenly.

" No, I don't, " said Bill, surlily ; " I don't recollect anything."

Weazel suppressed an imprecation which rose to his lips, and then went on :—

" Then of course you don't recollect the name of your father's lawyer ; I'll tell you, it was Littlegood."

" Very well, go on, " said Bill, on whom, to Weazel's great surprise, the name made no impression.

The truth is, that Bill Bennoch knew nothing, or next to nothing, of what had become of Rose. His wife had told him that the child had been hurt and was in the hospital ; and she had since even let him know that the girl had been apprenticed and was getting her own living. But Bill knew nothing about the particulars, and had never asked any questions.

When Weazel saw that Bill appeared to know no more about the name of Littlegood than any other, he, with his usual quickness of apprehension, coupled that fact with the circumstance that Rose had intimated that her father was not aware

of her place of dwelling, and concluded that Bill had never been told about Lorimer and his kindness at all.

"His name was Littlegood," said Weazel, continuing his story; "I've traced out all about him and his family. I can prove that he was a poor man before your father's death, that he retired from his profession with a fortune very soon *after* that event; that he never could have had the money to have made all the advances he pretended to have made; that there is a confederate of his, another attorney, alive now who knows all about it; in fact, almost everything is in fair train to prove that *you*, William Bennoch, are entitled to all this money as heir to your father; almost everything, except *one point* which must be established, and you yourself are the only man, perhaps, who can tell me how to establish that, which is —"

Here he got off his seat and approached close to Bill, when, to his intense disgust, he found him fast asleep. In his rage he even struck him on the shoulder, and Bill toppled over on his side; but he was too far gone to notice or resent the blow, for while Weazel imagined that he was only drinking beer, Bill had in reality almost finished the gin.

"Confound the beast," cried Weazel; and many another worse and more savage oaths he uttered, and he kicked him as he lay on the ground.

"Holloa there, holloa, master!" said two or three voices, and, turning round, Weazel saw the blacksmith's men returning to their work.

"He's dead drunk," said Weazel.

"That he *be*," cried one of the men; "or you durs n't have kicked him like that."

"Will you help to carry him home?" said Weazel, not noticing the remark; "I'll pay you, well."

"Oh, if that's it, we're ready enough," said the men.

And so they lifted up the prostrate Bill and carried him home to Laurel Court. As soon as Mrs. Bennoch saw him, she exclaimed:—

"Why how's this? Where did he get the liquor? Have any of you been fools enough to give it him?"

"No; it aint us; this here little gentleman, I take it, can tell you all about it," answered one of the men.

"I wish the devil had him then," screamed the virago.

"But, my good woman," began Weazel.

"Don't talk to me, you miserable little wretch you," was Mrs. Bennoch's polite interruption.

The workmen grinned; so Weazel paid them for their trouble and bade them walk off.

"I tell you," said Weazel, addressing Mrs. Bennoch again, "that I've come on most important business."

"And I tell you if you don't walk off this very instant, I'll empty every drop of these blessed suds right over you; and if ever you show your ugly little face nigh this place again, I'll break a poker over your head; there now."

And as she rose, apparently to carry the first part of her threat into execution, Weazel prudently decamped.

He imprecated Bill, and his wife, and the drink, and his own folly, as he went along, for he had missed his chance of getting a clue to the one all-important link in the chain without which all his dearly-cherished plans were vain, and his chance of success absolutely null.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN KELLY PERFORMS HIS MISSION.

CAPTAIN Kelly was a happy man. For once in his life, at least, he had a commission to execute thoroughly in accordance with his natural tastes. Not that he would have been satisfied to follow Lorimer's express direction in the case: he would have considered such a proceeding utterly unworthy of his own reputation and the character of his friend. Mild remonstrances were things which he looked on with the utmost contempt and he could never have been persuaded that the man who used them was anything but a coward. He remembered perfectly well that Lorimer had besought him to manage matters quietly and to induce Mr. Lavers, if possible, to apologize for his very improper letter; but he considered this moderation on Lorimer's part as merely acted for the purpose of giving himself a better case. A duel was, in Captain Kelley's opinion, the only possible result of what had taken place, and he was quite determined that nothing should be wanting on his part to carry out the proceedings entirely *en regle*. To do him justice, he would rather have been principal than second in such an affair—a taste in which few of us will coincide. The love of fighting, however, was as natural to Captain Kelly as it is to game cocks and bull terriers: he looked upon it as one of the highest felicities of life, and only regretted that civilization had made men so polite and forbearing towards one another that the chance of calling a man out was become lamentably rare. That anybody who happened to be blest with one of these scarce opportunities should neglect it or spoil it, was inconceiva-

ble in the gallant Captain's eyes, and we are not sure that he would not have considered it a piece of ingratitude to the Providence that gave him such a blessing.

Reflecting in this manner, the Captain left Lorimer Littlegood and walked straight to Mr. Lavers's lodgings. On reaching them, he had the mortification to learn that Mr. Lavers was out of town, and was not expected home till late at night. He was, therefore, doomed to pass the rest of the day in disappointment, and the night in longing for the hour to arrive when he might pay another visit to Charles street.

At an early hour the next morning, Captain Kelly arose, and swallowing a hasty breakfast, he sallied forth, called a Hansom cab, and drove to the lodgings of the doomed Lavers.

"Is Mr. Lavers within?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; but he's not up," replied the servant.

"Oh, never mind that, I just step up to him," cried the captain.

"Indeed you mustn't, sir," replied the servant, "I'd lose my place if I'd let you, sir."

Captain Kelly was about to overcome these objections by the simple expedient of taking the girl by the shoulders and thrusting her aside, when the landlord of the house appeared and assured him that Mr. Lavers had only returned very late from the country, and that he could not possibly allow him to be disturbed so early. The Captain was, therefore, again baulked in his benevolent intentions, and had to walk off in a most unenviable state of mind. Indeed if Mr. Lavers could only have overheard the Captain's muttered imprecations against his devoted body and bones, he would have sent at once to the nearest police-station for protection against the irate Irishman.

Captain Kelly strolled into St. James Park and entered the pretty garden which, being rather a credit to London, the authorities intend to chop in half and disfigure, lest cockneys should be too proud of the picturesque in their smoky city. Here he endeavored to while away the time by watching the ducks,

and making love to the servant girls who were airing small families thus early in the morning. This last was a pursuit in which he greatly excelled, having captured the hearts of probably more nursery-maids than any other gentleman of his age or experience. It is true that while indulging in this innocent amusement the small families were left to take care of themselves, and run risks of being drowned and gobbled up by the ducks ; but what had Captain Kelly to do with such trifles ?

To-day, however, he was singularly unsuccessful, which is to be imputed to the very unamiable frame of mind in which he found himself. He looked grim, and when he attempted one of the leers, which he had often found to produce so strong an effect, the nursery maids were rather alarmed than otherwise, and the children were disposed to cry and to imagine that he was one of the ogres of which they had read in favorite story-books. The very ducks shunned the Captain ; he didn't look like a man who came to give them bits of bread, but far more like one who would delight to devour them, roasted, and duly stuffed with sage and onions.

At length the clock struck ten, and Captain Kelly left the Park, and resolved to make one more effort to see Mr. Lavers.

This time he was more fortunate, for after a little discussion with the servant girl, a compliment to her good looks, and a bribe thrust into her hand, he was allowed to pass up-stairs to the second-floor front room where Mr Lavers was reposing.

A loud and hurried knock at the door produced only a sleepily muttered "come in" from Lavers, who mentally cursed the servant for disturbing him so soon, but was far too somnolent to make any expostulations. Even the "come in" was unnecessary, for Captain Kelly opened the door at the same moment that he knocked at it, and rushed into the room.

"Did you you write this, then, Mr. Lavers, or didn't you ?" he cried, pulling a note, or the part of one, from his pocket. "Now don't be denying your own fist like a paltry fellow ;

you know you wrote it, and you know it's a pack of dirty lies, and you must own you're a miserable little liar, or it's every bone in your body I'll break ; unless, maybe, you'll come out and fight like a man, and that's just what I don't believe you've the pluck to do, and I tell you so to your face."

To describe the volubility with which Captain Kelly uttered this lucid sentence would be as impossible as to depict the look of profound, though sleepily-perturbed wonder with which Mr. Lavers regarded him. He hardly knew who it was that was speaking to him, and he had not the remotest conception of the subject on which the Captain was talking.

"Who are you, sir?" he cried, "and what are you doing here?"

"And you don't know Captain Kelly, don't you?" was the indignant reply, "and you have not an idea of what he's come for, eh?—and you didn't write this letter, did you?—and you're not a dirty little liar, are you?"

And the Captain talked as fast as ever, and at every fresh query he whirled his stick about in a style worthy of Donnybrook fair.

"Will you leave my room, sir?" cried Lavers.

"Did you write this letter?" shouted Captain Kelly.

"Leave my room, sir!" roared Lavers.

"Did you write it, eh?" said the Captain, giving poor Lavers a hard thrust with his stick.

"Leave my room, you scoundrel, or I'll send for the police."

"Ah you will have it, will you?" roared the Captain, in a louder voice than ever, and he raised the stick and belabored the unlucky man, who screamed with pain and terror, while Kelly flourished the letter with one hand and the stick with the other, and while thrashing the prostrate man, kept shouting—

"And didn't ye write it, and ain't you a dirty little liar?"

The people of the house—the landlady and the landlord, and the servants, and the lodgers—had rushed up stairs hearing the noise, and thrusting their heads over one another into the room

they saw the extraordinary scene of the big Captain thrashing the recumbent Lavers, and both of them shouting and roaring against one another. And with the usual want of ready pluck which distinguishes such people, not one of them thought of rushing in and seizing Captain Kelly till a policeman had been procured to aid them, when the gallant Captain was made prisoner, not without fierce resistance on his part, and poor Lavers had been, meanwhile, almost beaten to a mummy.

The policeman conveyed Captain Kelly without further parley to the station-house, and duly charged him with a gross and violent assault, which he had partly witnessed himself. The Captain, though indignant at being placed in durance, treated the matter with great contempt, and magnanimously warned the police of the danger that might result to themselves from venturing to lay hands on so distinguished a warrior as he was. The sergeant smiled and the constables grinned ; and it was gently suggested to Captain Kelly that, as he would be taken at once before the sitting magistrate, it might be as well to provide himself with bail, in case he should be remanded—a contingency most likely to occur, as it was very doubtful whether Lavers would be able to appear to-day, so soon after the dreadful beating he had undergone.

Captain Kelly thought there was prudence in the advice ; and so, requesting the accommodation of writing materials, he sat down and penned the following note to Lorimer Littlegood :

“ Police station, Vine street.

“ **MY DEAR LITTLEGOOD,**

“ Here I am surrounded by the myrmidons of the law (the Peelers, in case you’re not up in your classics), all in consequence of my delivering your remonstrance to that miserable little piece of humanity, Lavers. They say I’ll want bail, as I’m going before the beaks ; so please come and release me from the clutches of the magistrate. Thank God, I must have broken some of his bones ! and so remain

“ **Your affectionate friend,**

“ **PHIL KELLY.**

When Lorimer received this epistle, he was lounging in his usual style over his breakfast.

"Confound the fellow! what can he have been doing?" he cried, jumping up. "Here Job—be quick—get me a Hansom, bring my boots and my coat. The devil take all Irishmen! I might have known he would have done something violent or absurd. A pretty piece of business I'm in for."

The cab came; Lorimer jumped into it, drove to Vine street, and found that Captain Kelly had just been conveyed to Marlborough Street, to be taken before the magistrate. On arriving at the latter place, he saw the gallant captain in the box, haranguing the sitting magistrate on the enormity of him—a captain in twenty services, and the hero of five hundred battles—being dragged off to a police station like a felon.

The magistrate quietly informed him that he had only to attend to the charge before him, which so far as he had heard the account of, it appeared to him most violent and even brutal.

Hereupon the captain began to foam, and to express his opinion that Mr. Lavers was a wretched little tailor, and the son of a tailor, and was unworthy any other treatment than that of being beaten like a cur of the very lowest degree.

The magistrate cut him short by telling him he must enter into recognizances in the sum of £500, to appear on a future day, and find a friend to become his security to a similar amount.

"Sure, that's easy done," cried Captain Kelly; "for here's my friend, Mr. Lorimer Littlegood, that's worth ten thousand a-year, and will be bail for me to any amount. For wasn't it for his sake, and all about a dirty letter written by that miserable little Lavers, speaking disrespectfully of Miss Stanley, who is—?"

"That will do; I have heard enough for the present," said the magistrate, to the great relief of Lorimer, who was getting dreadfully annoyed and indignant at the captain's entering into

the full history of the affair, and dragging in the very name he wished to save from publicity.

The recognizances were duly entered into, and Captain Kelly released to walk off with Lorimer.

"What the deuce have you been doing?" cried the latter.

"Sure, I took your remonstrance to Mr. Lavers, didn't I?" answered the captain, surlily.

"But you must have done something beyond remonstrating," said Lorimer.

"The little wretch ordered me out of his room, and I laid my stick about his miserable shoulders," replied Kelly.

"Why you must have been mad!" exclaimed Lorimer.

"I don't understand you, sir," cried the captain, indignantly. "And the next time you want to convey a remonstrance, perhaps you'll have the goodness to select some other messenger than Captain Kelly."

"I promise you that," said Lorimer, smiling in spite of his vexation.

"I wish you good day, sir," said the captain.

And he walked off with the air of an offended and ill-used man: nay, more, he actually and honestly believed himself so to be.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BOSHER'S STRANGE CLIENT.

MR. BOSHER, attorney-at-law, was sitting in his office, among the tin boxes containing the title-deeds and mortgages, receiving his clients. Mr. Bosher possessed a great talent in this line. He knew exactly the degree of respect, affability, or condescension to measure out to each class who called on him. He was perfectly aware that a country gentleman of acres and position, and a country shopkeeper of chandlery and puffing, were two very distinct animals, and required an entirely opposite treatment. There were also farmers and tradesmen of a superior class, noblemen and professional men, among his clients, and to each he behaved in due style. To the noble lord who called on him regarding the purchase of a few fresh farms to add to his estate, or the mortgage of some of his oldest family acres to add to his ready money, he was subservient, respectful, and flattering. To the next degree of society—the country gentlemen of county influence—he was a shade less obsequious, though perfectly respectful, assuming the air of a well-tried, confidential family adviser. To the merchants and professional men he behaved as a candid, open-hearted equal, though, at the same time, as one who feels flattered by the trust reposed in him. The farmers and shopkeepers he treated in a style of patronizing *bonhomie*, which made them regard him as an excellent gentleman, much to be reverenced and greatly to be loved. As for the lower order of clients—the small shopkeepers or smaller laborers—they were not sufficiently profitable as clients to merit any great attention on the part of Mr. Bosher; and,

therefore, towards them he assumed a stern air of superiority which made them bow to his commands with the servility which is shown by most people when any one is firm and bold enough to trample on them.

Mr. Bosher had already received a marquis, two country squires, an apothecary, and a grocer, and dismissed them, all thoroughly convinced that he was the very prince of attorneys, when the clerk opened his door, and announced :—

“ Mr. Weazel.”

“ Who is he ? What is he ? ” asked Mr. Bosher, who never had heard the name before.

“ He is from London, sir, he says ; and he wishes to see you on important business.”

“ Very well ; send him in. Some London attorney’s clerk, I suppose, who gives his own name instead of his master’s.”

The clerk ushered in our friend Mr. Weazel, and handed him a chair.

“ My name is Weazel,” began that gentleman, clearing his throat, and assuming his favorite grin.

“ So I heard, sir,” replied Mr. Bosher, with a cold, patronizing bow ; for Mr. Bosher had glanced at his visitor, run his eye quickly over him from head to foot, and decided that Mr. Weazel was not a man requiring any particular degree of respect from him.

“ I have called to see you on *very* important business,” said Weazel.

Bosher bowed, knowing perfectly well that every client fancies his own business the most important in the world.

“ You know the name of Littlegood, I believe ? ” continued Weazel.

“ Certainly,” said Mr. Bosher ; and then muttered to himself ; “ something about that young scapegrace, Mr. Lorimer, I suppose. I daresay the fellow’s a creditor of his.”

“ And perhaps,” said Weazel, looking like a cat about to

seize on a mouse—"perhaps you will be able also to recall the name of Bennoch?"

Mr. Bosher moved rather hastily in his chair at the sound of this name, but at the same time very slightly. He did not answer immediately, but glanced keenly and quickly at his questioner. Then assuming his usual calm and undemonstrative manner, he said :

" Bennoch—Bennoch—oh—ah—yes—let me see. Wasn't that the gentleman upon whose estates the father of the late Mr. Littlegood had several mortgages?"

" Exactly so ; I see you recollect him," cried Weazel, grinning in a manner meant to be pleasant : " I thought you would."

" I've heard of him," said Mr. Bosher ; " in fact, I almost believe that some business relative to Mr. Bennoch and Mr. Littlegood once passed through my office ; but it is so long since that I have forgotten all about it."

" Perhaps I can help you to recollect it," suggested Weazel, with the same grin. " You don't happen to remember that at Mr. Bennoch's death Mr. Littlegood claimed everything he died possessed of—do you?"

" I believe Mr. Littlegood's mortgages were very heavy ; in fact, I fancy I prepared some of them myself," replied Bosher.

" Precisely so," said Weazel. " Excuse me, Mr. Bosher, but I think you'll soon recollect *all* about it. You remember that Mr. Bennoch had a son?"

" I know nothing about Mr. Bennoch's family affairs," answered Bosher, assuming an air of extremely proper professional reserve.

" Well, I daresay I shall be able to make you acquainted with them, Mr. Bosher," said Weazel. " Mr. Bennoch *had* a son."

" Before we proceed any further in this extremely vague and strange conversation," interrupted Mr. Bosher, in his most dignified air—an air that never failed to produce a proper effect—

"allow me to ask who you are, and what is the object of your visit?"

"You know who I am," replied the other: "I'm Mr. Weazel—"

"A professional man?" asked Bosher.

"Not exactly."

"Then in what capacity, and for what object, do you call on me?"

"I call, sir," answered Weazel, fixing his sharp eyes eagerly on the attorney's face—"I call as the friend of Mr. William Bennoch, only son and heir-at-law of the late Mr. Bennoch, whose property so wonderfully melted away from *his* possession, and passed into that of Mr. Littlegood."

"Well?" asked Bosher, quite quietly, when the other paused to observe the effect of his reply.

"Well, sir, Mr. William Bennoch being convinced that his father was unjustly defrauded of his property by Mr. Littlegood, is determined to proceed against the heirs of the latter for its recovery."

"You call on me, then," said Mr. Bosher, in a perfectly unmoved and business-like manner,—"you call on me, then as the solicitor of the heirs of Mr. Littlegood?"

"Just so," answered Weazel, rather staggered at the coolness of the other.

"Then you must excuse me, Mr. Weazel, but I really cannot have any further conversation with you on the matter. Mr. Bennoch must instruct his *solicitor* to address to me whatever he may have to say regarding this strange delusion he appears to have got into his head—that is to say, supposing there is such a person as Mr. William Bennoch, though I really never heard of the late Mr. Bennoch ever having been married. I suppose you have *clear proof of his identity and legitimacy*;" and, notwithstanding the indifferent manner in which he had been speaking, Mr. Bosher laid very strong emphasis on the last word.

Weazel's satisfied grin was gone. Weazel looked poised; Weazel felt himself somehow scarcely a match for the attorney, who, while acting the most complete indifference, had at once pounced upon the missing link of Weazel's chain of evidence, and apparently detected its deficiency at a glance.

"Oh, we can easily prove all that!" was his reply after a short pause; but the tone of the answer lacked the confidence which the words themselves intimated; and if any acute observer had at that moment glanced at Mr. Bosher's face, he would have detected a smile of triumph, hasty and slight, but not the less decided.

"Very well, then," he observed, in the same tone as before; "his solicitor, as I said, had better communicate with me."

"I think he had better *not*—at all events for your own sake, Mr. Bosher," answered Weazel.

"What do you mean, sir?" asked the attorney, with a look of surprise. "I really don't understand you."

"Then the sooner we understand one another the better," replied Weazel, with his favorite grin again returning. "What I mean is this—that you are just as much implicated in these matters as your former friend and companion—Mr. Littlegood—that the proceedings will be as much against you as against the heirs of Mr. Littlegood, and that my friend is fully determined to have every penny refunded of the inheritance he has been defrauded of, and to punish those who defrauded him, or, at least, the sole survivor—yourself."

"The sooner you leave my office, sir, the better," cried the attorney; "you must be either insane or intoxicated to address such language to me. Do you suppose, sir, that *I*, Mr. Bosher, the best known solicitor in this county, the confidential adviser of its noblest and most influential families, the trustee of half the entailed estates it contains—do you suppose that *I*, sir, care for the threats of a man like yourself, the agent of a fellow who is either a bastard or an impostor altogether! Leave my office, sir."

Never in Weazel's lifetime had he been so completely staggered. He was as much convinced of Bosher's guilt as of his own existence. He was conscious of possessing excellent proofs of the transactions he intended to expose. He also felt that he had Bosher in his power; and yet the attorney assumed the appearance of such high-minded innocence, and such utter contempt for himself and his threats, as seemed quite irreconcilable with the real state of the case. He was really half a minute before he could make any reply. At length he said:—

"Very well, sir, I shall go; but allow me to observe that I have private letters of your own and the late Mr. Littlegood, and other documentary evidence, quite sufficient to prove the fraud that was committed on Mr. Bennoch, and to invalidate the title of the present possessors of his property; these documents I shall at once place in the hands of a respectable solicitor, and we shall see how Mr. Bosher will like the result."

So saying, Weazel rose, and moved towards the door.

"One moment, Mr. Weazel," cried Bosher, interrupting his progress. "Really, the course you have pursued is so entirely unprofessional, and the insinuations against my own character so very absurd, that I have been betrayed into more warmth of temper than I wished to exhibit. Will you sit down again for one instant?"

Weazel did so, and resumed his old grin; he felt that his turn was coming to triumph now.

"May I ask you what makes you feel so peculiar an interest in this case?" asked Bosher.

"Mr. William Bennoch is my friend," replied Weazel.

"Who will handsomely reward you if you procure him an estate," suggested Bosher, with a smile at once pleasant and confidential—a smile that seemed to say: We perfectly understand one another, and you needn't fear my telling any one.

"Very likely he will," replied Weazel looking knowing and cunning.

"But whom you might be induced to leave in the lurch if

other and more worthy people would make it worth your while—eh?" And again Mr. Bosher assumed such a confidential tone, that Weazel was thrown off his guard and winked assentingly.

"That want of proof that Mr. Bennoch ever had a son, or ever was married, is a great defect in your case," observed Bosher, as if talking to himself.

"It is."

"Precisely so, sir," said Bosher, in an entirely different tone now, and rising from his seat. "You have no such proof, and you never will have; and, therefore, I wish you good-day, and despise your absurd threats."

Weazel was astonished at the sudden change of tone and manner in Mr. Bosher, and in an instant saw that he had been entrapped into betraying his own secret. He ground his teeth with rage, while his grin became perfectly diabolical as he looked savagely at Bosher and left his office, muttering vengeance.

As soon as he was gone, Mr. Bosher sank into his chair, and rested his head for some moments on his hands, his elbows on the table.

"Danger—danger—ruin if successful," he murmured. "That fellow will, perhaps, go to the Littlegoods and alarm them. I had better call on them at once; the mother's a fool, but the daughter is a girl of sense, and fit for a better fate than I fear awaits her. I'll go and talk to her."

CHAPTER XIV.

PLEASANT PROSPECTS FOR LORIMER.

“ MARLBOROUGH STREET.—*Brutal Assault—Mysterious Case.*—Yesterday, a tall military-looking man, with immense whiskers and a strong Hibernian accent, who gave his name as Captain Kelly, was brought before this Court, charged with having committed a most violent and brutal assault on a gentleman namen Lavers, residing in Charles Street, St. James’s Square. The complainant was too ill from the injuries he had received, to attend ; but, from the evidence of the police constable and others, it appeared that Captain Kelly had forced his way into Mr. Lavers’s bedroom, and flourishing a letter in his hand, had proceeded to belabor the unfortunate gentleman, while in bed, with a thick stick, applying the grossest epithets to him all the while. He was at length secured and carried off to the police station. The magistrate remanded the defendant until the unfortunate complainant should be able to attend, but consented to accept bail in the meantime. The defendant was bound over in his own recognizances, and Mr. Lorimer Littlegood became his surety likewise. From what we could gather, the latter is implicated in this disgraceful transaction, which arises out of some affair connected with a Miss Stanley, who appears to be a *chère amie* of one or both of these *gentlemen.*”

Such was the pleasant little newspaper paragraph that met Lorimer’s eyes (under the head of “ Police”) the day after Captain Kelly’s redoubtable exploit. As soon as he had read it, he naturally grew furious, swore most reprehensibly, and devoted Captain Kelly, Mr. Lavers, police, and newspaper report-

ers to unpleasant regions paved with virtuous intentions. To do him justice, he was most indignant at the introduction of the name of Miss Stanley, and the horrible insinuation against her character. What could he do ? How could he ever clear himself in her eyes and the eyes of her mother ? How could he protect her from further annoyance in the matter ? The publicity given to his own name would have been unpleasant enough under other circumstances, but in the present instance, he was so overwhelmed with horror and disgust at the infamous inuendo regarding a virtuous young lady, that he forgot his own share in the matter, except so far as it was connected with hers.

At one moment he thought of rushing off to Kelly, and wreaking vengeance on his head. But what good purpose could be thereby effected ? and who knew in what mysterious haunt of the great metropolis the hero of five hundred battles lived ? Another idea was to write to the papers, and state the whole truth. But that was only to make publicity more public. Besides this, though we don't pretend that Lorimer thought of it, it is a great mistake to write letters to the newspapers. No good ever results from it to any man who is not a professional writer, and working for his living through that means. Anonymous letters count for nothing ; the editor inserts them when they entirely coincide with his own views, or, perhaps, when he chooses to allow a little controversy to go on in his paper at a time when news is scarce, and on a topic on which he has no opinion to express. Letters signed with initials, or with some well known *nom de plume*, are generally paid for as much as the leading articles or the reports, and consequently quite valueless as *letters*, purporting to come from outsiders and not regular contributors. Letters about street organs, beggars, railways, hotels and so forth, are all very well in their way, though the people who write them must have very little else to occupy their time. Letters on purely personal matters are a very great mistake, and the man who writes them must be as great a

noodle as the editor who admits them. The truth is, that ninety-nine people out of a hundred are desperately fond of seeing their bad English and worse grammar in print, and so send letters to newspapers under pretence of vindicating their characters or correcting errors, but in reality, either to gain vulgar notoriety, to puff themselves or their business, or to "appear in print."

Lorimer wisely abandoned the idea of writing to the papers as calculated to increase the evil of publicity which already vexed him so seriously. At length he adopted a resolution which was manly and straightforward, if not prudent, namely, to call on the Stanleys at once, and offer every apology in his power, and beg them to advise him how to act. He, therefore, ordered his cabriolet, and drove at once to their house.

"Not at home," was the quiet reply of the servant who opened the door, when Job knocked at it. The answer was disheartening, especially as Lorimer could have sworn that he had caught a glimpse of Mrs. Stanley near the window just as he drew up.

"They will never receive me again," he thought, as he drove away, "and it is all my own fault, for if I had gone to Lavers myself, or selected any other emissary than that confounded Irishman, I should never have given them the pain and annoyance that they must now be suffering."

Here he gave his mare such a cut with the whip as made her jump into the air, and nearly unshipped our friend Job Peck from his perch behind the cabriolet.

He returned home in a terrible ill-humor, and determined not to leave the house again that day, unless he should hit upon some plan of operations that might demand his presence elsewhere. Walking up and down the room, and thinking, and plotting to no purpose, he at length mechanically took up some of the square formal-looking letters which were lying on the table addressed to him.

They were nearly all bills.

It is curious to see how a man, who fancies his whole atten-

tion devoted to one subject, will find himself half unconsciously becoming engrossed by an entirely opposite one. Thus Lorimer Littlegood, who never troubled himself about his debts, began suddenly to look carefully over his bills, and reckon up their amounts, at the very moment when he was writhing under the pain of an event which, he imagined, had absorbed all his thoughts. Certainly he might be pardoned for being led away by the extraordinary number of "little bills" (so termed by their senders) which lay before him.

To recapitulate them would be to fill a budget as large as that annual abomination of the name presented to a disgusted House of Commons by a long-winded Chancellor of the Exchequer. Suffice it to say, that Lorimer became so interested in them as to take down their amounts on a sheet of paper, and to add them up ; and we may perhaps forgive him for being slightly astonished at finding them amount to £2,586 7s. 9d.

"How can I possibly owe all this money?" cried Lorimer to himself.

Perhaps a more sensible question would have been, "How can I possibly pay it?" Nothing is easier than to get into debt —few things more difficult than to get out of it again. Lorimer had glided pleasantly along the easy path into the pit, and he had now to try the difficult one of backing out again.

"I must really look over these bills carefully. I wonder whether Job knows anything about figures." He rang the bell, and Job appeared. "Job, you can read and write, I know, can you cast up accounts?"

"Yes, sir," replied Job, slightly offended at the bare idea of his acquirements being depreciated. "Anything up to long division, sir."

"Very well. Now, look here, Job ; take all these bills and read every item carefully. If you find any mistakes of reckoning, make a note of it on that sheet of paper ; any of the things that seem very much overcharged (at least, such things

as you know anything about), let me know. Add all the bills up separately, to see if they are correctly cast up. You may sit here and do it. I am going out."

Excessively delighted at this proof of confidence on the part of his master was Job Peck, and he set at once earnestly to his novel task. It took him three hours to get through it, and gave him a violent headache; but Job succeeded in taxing all the stable bills and some of the household ones. As to the tailors, jewellers, confectioners, hosiers, perfumers, &c., &c., Job could only open his eyes in intense surprise at their charges but had not the remotest idea whether they were proper ones or not. When he came eventually to cast all the bills together, and to discover the grand total, Job felt half sick with apprehension, and at the same time half wild with delight; for he was convinced that his master was either a ruined man or a second Monte Christo, a gentleman concerning whom he had read in a very bad translation of M. Dumas' work.

While Lorimer Littlegood left Job at his new employment, he set forth to call upon some of his most intimate friends, and find out whether any of them could tell him where Captain Kelly resided. He was quite unsuccessful till he met O'Neil.

It is a fact which the most unobservant of our readers must have noted, that Irishman in London all know one another, though they are sometimes on intimate terms and sometimes on bad ones; but, whether nominally friends or not, they always know one another's histories, haunts, and pursuits, and invariably give one another bad characters. We never knew one Irishman to speak well of another behind his back; that is to say, London Irishmen—because the London specimen of the Emerald Islander is by no means a fair one of the whole nation. As the worst samples of the English are to be found in the various continental cities, so the least favorable specimens of the Irish are to be seen away from their own country. It may still remain a question, however, why they backbite each other so pertinaciously: the most probable solution is

that "as two of a trade never agree," so London Irishmen being generally of a trade to which we won't give a name, are naturally jealous of competition.

"Between ourselves, my dear, Littlegood," observed O'Neil (Irishmen are always very affectionate too), "that same Captain Kelly is a shocking scoundrel. Of course I don't want to quarrel with him, so you won't hint a word of what I say; but you really should have as little to do with him as possible."

"I dare say you're quite right," replied Lorimer, "and I heartily wish I never had had anything to do with him, for he has got me into this confounded mess, and I don't see my way out of it clearly."

"I do," said O'Neil.

"How?" asked Lorimer.

"Don't you think he will be heavily punished by the magistrate for his assault on Lavers?"

"Undoubtedly," said Lorimer.

"He would get a month or two of imprisonment without the option of a fine; don't you think so?" continued O'Neil.

"I really believe so."

"For how much are you his bail?" demanded O'Neil.

"One thousand pounds; he was to have had two sureties in five hundred each, but the magistrate consented to take me in the whole sum instead."

"You had better have the cash ready then," remarked O'Neil.

"Why so?" inquired Lorimer, surprised.

"My dear fellow, just because Kelly knows what the result of this affair would be as well as you or I, and I'll bet you twenty pounds he has bolted already."

"You don't really mean that!"

"I do; now go and see for yourself. Here's his address: 5 Russell Court, Brydges Street, Covent Garden."

"What a strange address!" exclaimed Lorimer.

"You'll find the place still more remarkable than the name of it, I think," answered O'Neil, with a laugh. "My dear fellow, he is a regular low adventurer, upon my soul he is,—a man quite unfit for you to associate with. But you had better go and look after him at once."

"Thank you," replied Lorimer, and he took a cab and drove to Russell Court.

"Hooray ! here's a swell !" shouted a troop of small dirty boys as Lorimer entered the court; "give us a copper your honor,—leave him alone, he don't have such wulgar things,—a sixpence, your honor ; or we don't mind a shilling, you honor ; or you can stand a pot, your honor ;" and so went on the young blackguards, while Lorimer smiling in spite of the humor he was in, forced his way through them.

"Does Captain Kelly live here ?" he asked of a slatternly woman at the door.

"No, hang him ! he did ; but he's bolted this blessed morning ; and, what's more, he hasn't paid me his rent," she replied.

"But how do you know that he isn't coming back ?" asked Lorimer.

"Because the dirty thief has taken everything he had with him—it wasn't much, to be sure—and he's been and sent me the key of his room in a letter, and never paid the post—bad luck to the villain !"

"He's a great rascal," muttered Lorimer, aloud.

"True for you," answered the woman.

Lorimer turned away, and drove home. "O'Neil was right," said he: "I must write to Bosher to raise the money."

CHAPTER XV.

JOB PECK'S HOLIDAY.

JOB PECK performed his task so well that his master was happy to give him a holiday. So one fine morning, Job dressed himself in his best, prepared to astonish his friends and relations, and to enjoy himself thoroughly.

Job was a well-made lad ; and the clothes he wore, having been his master's, and very little worn, Job looked almost like a gentleman, when fully equipped. The exceptional parts of his costume were the gloves and the boots. Job's hands could not be persuaded by any manner of coaxing to make their way into a pair of Lorimer's gloves, so that all those cast-off articles were useless to poor Job, and he was obliged to don a pair of his own white Berlins. Job's feet, too, were rather large—broad and knobby—and his master's being small and well-shaped, it was hopeless to attempt to thrust his feet into Mr. Littlegood's Wellingtons. However, Job had very respectable top-boots, and who was to see the tops under his trowsers ?

Just as Job was about to leave the house, the double knock of the postman was heard, and two letters were delivered, addressed to his master. Partly from a wish to appear attentive, and partly also from a desire to display the present elegance of his personal appearance, Job took them up to Lorimer's room himself.

“ Come in,” cried his master ; and Job entered.

Lorimer smiled—though he would not let Job see that he did so—at Job's costume, and took the letters.

“Stay a moment, Job,” he said, and opened the envelopes.

One was from Mr. Bosher, and informed him that “there would be very great difficulty in raising the £1,000—indeed, he could by no means promise to do so at all; and he might add, that it would probably be necessary for Lorimer to prepare himself for events which might lead to serious change in his position and fortune.”

Lorimer read and re-read the letter, but could make nothing of it, so mysteriously was it worded. Indeed, he began to suspect that old Bosher must have written it after dinner, and after a bottle of port, too. “Change in his position and fortune! What could it mean?” But stay—there was another letter—it was from his sister—and it might, perhaps, be more explanatory.

He opened it, and read as follows :

“MY DEAREST BROTHER,

“Mr. Bosher has been here to-day, and has held a long discussion with me—mama being unwell in her room. The subject of our conversation was far from a pleasant one, though I cannot say I clearly understand it. You know his mysterious way of talking—a manner which always makes me feel a distrust of him—and therefore you will readily excuse my want of comprehension. It appears that there is some person who claims all our property, declaring that our grandfather came by it wrongfully. Mr. Bosher does not seem to attach *very* great importance to this claim, but he says there *may* be a great deal in it, and that it behoves us all, therefore, to be very careful and economical, as, in case of litigation, we shall want all the ready money we can command; and if we are beaten, we may have to refund what we have spent of the estate. I am telling you, as nearly as possible, his own words; but I don’t know exactly what he means. The strangest part of it is, that he speaks in such an alarmed way on the subject, that one would fancy he was *personally* interested in it. You may

imagine that he was very much annoyed at such a moment, to receive your request for a thousand pounds, to be advanced directly ; and he tells me that he believes you to be seriously in debt. My dear, dear brother, what can you be doing ? Do you find all the pleasure you anticipated from 'seeing life ?' or was your sister's interpretation of its meaning so *very* far from the truth ? Don't think that I am reproaching you—I have no right, and no desire to do so ; but God grant that my dear, noble-hearted brother, may not lose one particle of high principle, and generous, manly feeling ! You tell me nothing more of Miss Stanley——"

"Thank God, she hasn't seen the papers !" thought Lorimer.

"And I am so anxious to know more about her ; you will easily guess why. We are living in our usual quiet, humdrum way, very anxious for a visit from you, when you can spare the time. Indeed, my dear Lorimer, I almost think it would be prudent of you to come down and see Mr. Bosher yourself ; he would, perhaps, be more communicative to you than to me. God bless you.

"Ever your attached sister."

"She's right—I'll go this very day. Job, my lad, I'm sorry to keep you at all, but just be good enough to put a few things into a small portmanteau for me—enough for a day or two. I am going down to my mother's house. I shall not want you with me."

Job soon packed the small portmanteau ; his master bestowed a sovereign on him, and Job started to enjoy his holiday, though with a less light heart now, for Job was convinced that Lorimer had received bad news of some kind, and coupling that fact with the list of bills he had gone over two days before, Job suspected that money matters troubled his master's mind.

Two hours later, Lorimer Littlegood was in the train starting for his old home. We shall not accompany him there, but follow our friend Job through his day's holiday.

"Here's a gentleman, please," cried little Peck number one, opening the door of his brother's abode to him.

Mrs. Peck rose from her chair where she was sitting, busily engaged in making children's pinny-fores, and bobbed a curtsey. Job burst out laughing.

"Why, gracious me, it's Job!" she cried, surprised and pleased, but a little bit vexed, too, at her wasted civility. "Why, Job, you *are* a gentleman! I never!"

"I've got a holiday," said Job; "and master's given me a sovereign to spend, so I thought I'd come and ask you and the little ones to come and have a ride down to Greenwich with me, and then we could all go to Cremorne in the evening, and have tea and shrimps."

"Oh, yes; oh, yes; we'll go, Uncle Job!" cried little Pecks, numbers one, two and three.

"Nonsense, nonsense, my dears: hold your little tongues," said Mrs. Peck, in a kind tone. "I couldn't go, Job, without your brother, and he won't be home till evening, though it's very kind of you, indeed, to ask us. Now don't cry, dears, and Job will give you each a cake, I dare say. Excuse me, Job, but don't you think Miss Sparks would like to go with you instead?"

And as Mrs. Peck said this, she looked very knowing, and Job colored and looked very foolish.

"You'd better go and ask her, Job," continued Mrs. Peck, smiling.

"I—I—I don't like——"

"Don't like her, Job!" exclaimed Mrs. Peck.

"I didn't say that—indeed, I didn't," cried Job, hastily and indignantly. "I meant I was afraid to ask her."

"Stuff and nonsense! she's a very nice girl, Job, but she's not a bit too good for you. And now you've got a good situation, and ought to be saving money, there's no reason why you shouldn't think that, some day or other, you may like to get married and settled."

Job colored worse than ever, and felt as if he were doing something dreadful.

"Some day," continued Mrs. Peck, who, like every good-hearted woman, was fond of marrying and settling people—"some day, perhaps your master will give you an eating-house, or something of that sort, to retire on, and make you a respectable family man. I don't believe that wicked Mr. Weazel, who says Mr. Littlegood will be in prison before long. He's a dangerous, bad man, that Weazel."

Job was struck with Mrs. Peck's words about his master, but he said nothing about them, determined to keep his own counsel. He took her advice, however, about Miss Sparks, and proceeded to call on that young lady forthwith.

Miss Sparks was at home, and delighted to see Job, at whom she stared with "all her eyes." She had never seen him so good-looking or so well-dressed before. Miss Sparks made flowers--indeed, she was patronized by Mr. and Mrs. Crump, but being a "very superior hand," she was enabled to make a much better living than most of her calling. Miss Sparks was overjoyed at Job's proposal, and consented to dress in her best, and start forthwith, for she was not in the slightest degree bashful in the presence of Job, whom she regarded as a great amiable boy, though he was two years older than herself. She was a very pretty, coquettish, good little girl; and if ever Job did get settled in an eating-house, as his sister-in-law suggested, he could scarcely select a better or more suitable partner for life than Fanny Sparks.

We cannot accompany Job and his fair lady to Greenwich, for really everybody knows exactly what a visit to Greenwich is; and if any one should be in such a lamentable state of ignorance as *not* to know from personal experience, there have been funny writers enough to describe it, without our attempting to add to the dismal heap of forced facetiousness wasted on the subject.

And so with the visit to Cremorne. Everybody, from Prince

Albert downwards, has been there, including, we have no doubt, half the bench of bishops and the peeresses' gallery. Indeed, we are not at all sure that we have not more than once seen dignitaries of the church doing the Varsoviana with duchesses on the dancing platform : if we are mistaken, the reader must not be angry with us for the error ; and any bishop or duchess who thinks proper may address us a letter of disclaimer of being one of those alluded to, and we promise to print it next month.

Job and his fair friend ate shrimps and drank tea ; saw the sights of the circus, and the ballet, and the fireworks, and the acrobats, and danced polkas and quadrilles, and then took to brandy-and-water and lobsters ; and finally departed about midnight, very happy and slightly in love—at least, the lady slightly, and Job desperately.

After seeing Miss Sparks safely to her domicile, Job valiantly hailed a Hansom, and drove home to his master's residence. Paying the cabman in the most approved style over the roof of the cab, he sprang to the ground, and was immediately tapped on the shoulder by one individual, while another insinuated an arm through his.

“ Beg pardon—Mr. Littlegood, I think,” said one.

“ I'm not,” cried Job.

“ All right—we know all about that, sir ; in course you're *not*, but you'll excuse us for considering you *are*,” and the fellow gave a knowing wink.

“ It's only a case of four hundred and fifty—warrant of attorney given to Joseph Myers, Esq., jeweller. You must come along with us, sir, *if* you please.”

“ But I tell you,” Job began, and then he suddenly checked himself. It immediately occurred to him that the men were sheriff's officers, who were arresting him in mistake for his master. Perhaps, if he allowed the mistake to continue, it might have the effect of saving his master altogether ; at all events, he would try it. So Job held his tongue. Job had not been

brought up among grooms and jockeys for nothing: he was almost as sharp as he was perfectly innocent.

“It's all right, governor,” said one of the officers. “We'd better get a cab, perhaps, as it's a good step to Cursitor Street. I suppose you'll go there?”

Job nodded assent.

A cab was soon procured, and the three entered it.

“You see the plaintiff saw all that police case, and he heard the captain had bolted, and that you'd be let in for the thousand. So he just thought he'd better make sure of his own little debt—he signs judgment, gives us the warrant, and here you are.”

Job only nodded. He considered it best to hold his tongue as much as possible.

Reaching Cursitor Street, the door of the renowned lock-up-house was opened, and Job Peck admitted within its hospitable portals.

“A reg'lar swell,” whispered the officer who had taken him; “lots of tin.”

“A private room, sir, I suppose,” said the doorkeeper on this hint.

“Yes,” said Job.

And Job was shown up-stairs, and passed that night under the roof of Mr. Slowman.

CHAPTER XVI.

FURTHER ADVENTURES OF MR. JOB PECK AND HIS MASTER.

MR. JOB PECK was perfectly easy in his mind as far as he was personally concerned. Indeed, he rather liked being locked up; first, for the satisfaction of being taken for a gentleman, and, secondly, for the fun of seeing how the Philistines would look when they found they had got the wrong man. Feeling it incumbent on him to support the character of a gentleman and a man of fashion to the utmost of his ability, he cried, "Come in!" in the most independent style, when the servant at the sponging-house knocked at his door next morning.

"What would you like for breakfast, sir?" he was asked.

"Muffins, eggs, and bloaters," said Job, in an authoritative tone; "and, I say, take care how you make the coffee, for I'm dayvilish partickler."

"Yes, sir; and would you like the loan of a razor?"

"Yees," drawled Job, "if you've one that isn't a saw."

"I'll get you a good un, sir; lor' bless ye, you can have hanythink here for money."

"Holloa, waiter," cried Job, "the 'Post,' if you please."

"The post, sir? letters do you mean, sir?"

"The '*Morning Post*;' I always read it at breakfast."

"Certainly, sir," and the waiter, who expected a tremendous "tip" from the "swell," left the room.

"Blest if this aint fun," said Job to himself; "lor', it's easy enough to do the gentleman if you've only the pluck. I don't think I could do master so well as I could Mr. Lavers, 'cause

master don't swagger and bully—he is so quiet like; and yet he *is* a gentleman, every inch of him. I'm precious glad they aint got *him*."

Job soon completed his toilet (he had taken good care to hide the top-boots during the night), and entered the private sitting-room, where breakfast awaited him, and where he was soon destined to receive a visitor.

Mr. Joseph Myers had passed a far less comfortable night than his imaginary debtor; not from any compassion he might be supposed to feel for the latter, but from some inexplicable presentiment that existed in his mind of his not having pursued the wisest course in the world in reference to the arrest. It was satisfactory to know that he had him under lock and key (for, be it observed, that Mr. Myers had himself pointed out Job for Lorimer the night before, so that the mistake had been his own), and yet he began to doubt the wisdom of the step he had taken.

After a little consideration, he determined to call on his victim, try to mollify his wrath, and find out the exact state of his affairs. If they should prove to be "all right" after all, he promised himself the satisfaction of making matters smooth again, and seducing Mr. Lorimer Littlegood a little further into his clutches.

After a good breakfast and an elaborate toilet (for, like most of his "persuasion," Mr. Myers was great in the article of jewellery), he took a cab, and drove to Slowman's.

"Ha! how are you?" said the doorkeeper, when he recognized Mr. Myers's well-known face.

"How d'ye do," replied Mr. Myers; "well, so you've got my young swell here, have you?"

"Safe enough. Do you want to see him? I don't think he's up yet. Shall I go and see?"

"Do, please."

The doorkeeper went up to Job's private room, and return-

ed in a minute with the information that Mr. Littlegood was up and dressed, and would be happy to see Mr. Myers.

"I say," whispered Myers, "come with me just inside the room till we see how he looks; because you see these young swells are so violent sometimes, and——"

"And you was once pumped on in the Bench, when you went to see one of 'em, eh?" said the other, with a grin.

"Come, like a good fellow," said Myers, not pretending to notice the last part of the speaker's remarks.

"All right," answered the other; and together they went up stairs, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," cried Job, and they entered.

"Holloa!" exclaimed Myers, staggering back, and turning as white as a sheet, or, rather, as yellow as a Chinese.

"What's the matter?" asked the doorkeeper.

"That—aint—him," gasped Myers.

"Aint who?" asked the other.

"Mr. Littlegood; you've got—the wrong man—oh, my!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" guffawed the doorkeeper, who was extremely amused.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chimed in Job, who was just as much pleased. "I told 'em so, but they wouldn't believe me."

"Why, it's his groom," said Myers.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the doorkeeper.

"Where's your master?" cried Myers.

"You'd better find out for yourself," said Job, laughing, "or stay, I don't mind giving you the address if you'll make it worth my while," and Job looked knowing.

"I'll give you a fiver—there," said Myers, "you're a sensible lad."

"Here's the address," said Job; and he handed Mr. Myers a piece of paper, on which he had written "Afrikey!"

"How dare you play tricks with me, you young rascal?" cried Myers in a rage.

"No, I ain't a rascal," answered Job, "but that's what you'd

like to make me. Do you think I'm going to be bribed to get my master into trouble, you old Jew cheat?"

"You shall suffer for this," cried Myers.

"*You* shall," answered Job, "for locking me up; I know it's false imprisonment, and some one'll have to pay me handsome for it, that's all."

Myers looked at the doorkeeper, and the doorkeeper looked at Myers.

"He's a knowinger card than you thought for," whispered the former.

"D—— him," growled Myers.

"I say, young feller," suggested the doorkeeper addressing Job, "don't you think you'd better accept the fiver that Mr. Myers was going to give you for the address, and say no more about the arrest?"

Job made no reply.

"Well, I don't mind giving it to you," said Myers, "is it a bargain?"

"Very well," answered Job, taking the money, "and now I suppose I may go?"

"All right," said the doorkeeper.

"I say, my good lad, don't you think you may as well give me the address and pocket another of those fivers—or, say two more—come!" said Myers insinuatingly.

"If you try on that game with me I'll just punch your head—so that's all about it," answered Job, and he walked away indignantly.

When Job reached his master's lodgings, he took off his holiday clothes, and donned his ordinary livery attire, and he sat down to discuss, in such brains as he had, what he should do next. After a little reflection, it appeared to him that the safest thing would be to go down to his master in the country; for although Lorimer had not told him where he was going, Job had no doubt but it was to his mother's house.

He, therefore, walked forth, and only strolled about the

streets for some time to observe if any one were following ; for Job, as we remarked, had not lived all his life among grooms and jockeys for nothing ; he was as 'cute as a Yankee Jew of Scotch descent, which, we believe, is considered the very "smartest" breed in the world. Being satisfied that no one was remarking him, he got into an omnibus and drove to the station, took a ticket for Muddleford, and soon reached that remarkable place.

At Verbena Cottage, Job met his master in the garden, strolling with his mother and sister.

"What, Job ! why, what brings you here ?" exclaimed Lorimer in surprise.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I think I'd better speak to you alone, sir ; though it's nothing pertickler, sir," he added as he saw Mrs. Littlegood looking dreadfully alarmed.

"Oh yes it is ! it's something dreadful, I'm sure of it," said the anxious mother.

"My dear mamma, it can't be anything very bad," said Jessie, "since we are all three here, and in good health."

"Oh ! my poor nerves !" cried Mrs. Littlegood.

"Come, dear," said Jessie, gently, and leading her away, while she glanced half inquiringly and half sorrowfully at Lorimer.

"Now, then, Job, what is it ?" asked Lorimer, as soon as they were alone.

Job related his late adventure.

"Confound the fellow ! I'll go up to London and horsewhip him," cried Lorimer.

"Beg pardon, sir," suggested Job, "but I think you'd better take the money with you, sir ; or else, sir, I'm afeard they'll serve you as they did me—and they're uncommon dirty quarters, sir, in Cursed Street."

Lorimer burst out laughing.

"You're a sensible fellow, Job, and you give me very good

advice. You've really acted your part in this affair very cleverly, and I promise you I'll not forget it."

Job felt highly delighted, and thought he would like to be arrested every day to get the same praise.

"I must be off to Bosher," said Lorimer, "this is getting serious. Job, just tell my mother and sister that I shall be back in half an hour," and so saying, he hastened out of the garden to the attorney's house.

When Bosher heard Lorimer's account of Job Peck's arrest, he was not in the least degree astonished ; he was simply surprised that Lorimer himself had not been arrested long ago.

"You know the state of affairs as regards your property, Mr. Littlegood," remarked the lawyer.

"I wish to heaven I did," said Lorimer, impatiently : "but I assure you, I know nothing of the kind ; you tell me that this story about my grandfather having become improperly possessed of the estate is all trumped up, and yet you add that there is danger. You advise me not to raise any more money, and yet you say my title is good. In fact you act just as if *you* were personally and not merely professionally concerned."

Mr. Bosher here took a sharp glance at Lorimer, and made a slight approach to blush ; but it was gone in a moment, and, without answering Lorimer's remark, he said :

"Do you know the exact amount of your debts?"

"I do," said Lorimer ; "they are £2,586 7s. 9."

"And you want to pay them?" asked the attorney, talking as if he were merely gaining time for reflection.

"I must and will," said Lorimer. "Pardon me, Mr. Bosher, I don't wish to offend you, but if you cannot raise me this money at once, I shall apply this very day to another solicitor —of course you will give me my title deeds."

Bosher evidently did not like this suggestion.

"You shall have the money," said he.

"I must have exactly £100 beyond that sum," said Lorimer, "and I must have it *at once*."

"I will bring it to you this afternoon," said Bosher.

"Thank you," replied Lorimer; and he returned to his mother's cottage.

It gave him some trouble and forced him to some dissimulation to tranquilize the mind of his mother, who seemed determined to believe that some calamity had befallen him. After a conversation with his sister, it was decided that unless actual hostilities were commenced in reference to the property, it would be unnecessary to give the good lady any information on the subject.

With Jessie he entered fully on the theme.

"You seem to have no fear that these people's claims may be well founded, Lorimer?" remarked his sister.

"None at all. Bosher assures me that it's all nonsense, and people are constantly playing such tricks—in fact, that some of the first estates in England are claimed by adventurers and people who have no real title to them, but hope to be bought off, as it's disagreeable to go to law at all times, and especially with men of straw, as he calls them."

"That seems reasonable enough," answered Jessie; "but if Mr. Bosher so despises these people's pretensions, why does he warn you that you may soon have no property at all? Why does he almost refuse to raise money on it?"

"Perhaps that is only meant for kindness," suggested Lorimer—"to prevent me from extravagance."

"If I thought so," replied Jessie, "I should indeed respect him; but really, my dear brother, I cannot believe it. I am almost ashamed of my suspicions, but there has always been something about that man's manner that has made me distrust him, or at least has prevented me from feeling that entire confidence in him that I knew I ought otherwise to have in so old a friend of our family."

"Ah, you women who have nothing to do but to sit at home and think—you form such strange notions of men and

things, and take such odd fancies into you little heads," said Lorimer, laughing and kissing his sister.

"Were my fancies about 'seeing life' so very far from the truth, dear?" asked she, smiling.

"Ahem!" said Lorimer: "you have me there, I'm afraid. And yet, Jessie dear, I have not been so very dissipated as you may imagine."

"I never did imagine, my dear brother, that you would be guilty of low or mean vices—your good taste and your high principle would surely protect you from either. But is there not a goodly—no, an evil—catalogue of what are charitably called 'follies,' which are but a few steps removed from grosser vices, and, perhaps, not intrinsically less evil than they?"

"Perhaps so, my dear little metaphysician," said her brother.

"Don't call me that—anything but that," cried Jessie. "Why, you doom me irretrievably to be an old maid if you prove me to deserve that character."

"And are you very much afraid of being an old maid?" asked Lorimer, laughing.

"Horribly," answered Jessie.

"And is there any one—"

"No, certainly not, sir. Talk of women being inquisitive!"

"God bless you, Jessie!" cried Lorimer, kissing the laughing, blushing girl. "By Jove, you should have a good husband if I chose for you! I'm afraid I don't know one worthy of you."

"Not one among your friends like my own dear brother?" asked Jessie, smiling.

"If there should be he would not be good enough for my dear sister," returned Lorimer. "Jessie, I am going to London early to-morrow morning."

"Why so soon?"

"To pay my debts and reform," answered Lorimer.

"Really reform?" asked Jessie, with a smile, "or only fancy so for a little while?"

"Really—seriously," answered Lorimer. "Indeed, Jessie, I have seen enough of life in *one* of its phases; but I hope to see it in better ones. Something tells me that I may have to view it from a very different point of view from the present. What if we *were* to lose all our property?"

Both were silent for a moment.

"I will tell you, Lorimer," said Jessie, with a flushed cheek and an earnest voice: "you would shrink from the battle of life at first; then you would plunge bravely, perhaps too rashly, into it; in the end, you would conquer and be a noble, if not a great character."

"Thanks, Jessie, dear;—and you?"

"I do not know; but I have no fear," she said without any of her former enthusiasm, but with perfect calmness. "I fancy that I was not meant for still life; but whatever lot mine may be, God's will be done!"

She bowed her head as she said this, and there was a prophetic mournfulness in her tone that struck on Lorimer's heart more keenly than he could have believed.

"Amen!" he said. "And now, good night, dear sister."

CHAPTER XVII.

LORIMER HOLDS A LEVEE AND MAKES A SPEECH.

THE morning after Lorimer's arrival in town his ante-room presented a curious spectacle. He had employed the whole of the previous afternoon in writing letters to each of his creditors requesting one and all of them (with the exception of Mr. Myers, whom he prudently paid at once), to be at his rooms at eleven o'clock the next day. Accordingly, at that hour, a motley group assembled. There were tailors, hosiers, hatters, bootmakers, jewellers, perfumers, horse-dealers, coachbuilders, &c. &c. These worthy gentlemen stared at one another in surprise, as Job Peck ushered one after the other into the ante-room, saying to each :—

“Take a seat please; master 'll come to you directly.”

Each one did as he was bidden, but was evidently puzzled to know what it all meant. Mr. Snips, the tailor, happened to know Mr. Stumps, the bootmaker; and Mr. Tile, the hatter, had a slight acquaintance with Mr. Civet, the perfumer. And so they began to ask one another, confidentially and in whispers, what they thought of the matter, and what could be the peculiar reason for their being all there, summoned at the same moment.

“Looks queer, *I* think,” said Stumps.

“Don't like the cut of it at all,” responded Snips.

“What can be in his 'ead?” asked Tile.

“I'm afraid I smell a rat,” answered Civet.

“What?”

“Looks like a meetin' of creditors,” replied Civet.

“No doubt about that,” said Tile; “but what's it for?”

"Composition, *I'm* afraid."

"Oh, lor', you don't think so, do you?" answered Tile.

At last the conversation began to get general, though carried on in whispers. Slight hints were dropped of want of confidence in Mr. Lorimer Littlegood, and insinuations against his character cautiously thrown in.

"I thought he'd go to the dogs," observed Curb, the horse-dealer, to Spokes, the carriage builder;—"I thought he'd go to the dogs when I saw those jewellers and chaps about him."

"They're a bad lot," responded Spokes, "it's astonishing the number of young chaps they've led to ruin."

"As soon as I heard he'd got into the hands of those cursed horse-jockeys," remarked Filagree, the jeweller, "I was afraid it was all up with him."

"No young man can stand *their* tricks long," replied Lawn, the hosier, as both glanced distrustfully towards the two former speakers.

The door of the room now opened and in walked Mr. Lorimer Littlegood, who was greeted with profound bows from all present.

"Pray take your seats, gentlemen; Job, give me a chair," said Lorimer, looking grave, though a very keen observer might have observed a slight twinkle in the eye, and a repressed attempt of the mouth to curl at the corners, which indicated a desire to laugh or the anticipation of sport.

"Gentlemen, I believe I see before me all my creditors," began Lorimer. "I am happy that you are not more numerous, both for my sake and your own."

Creditors felt queer, and began to look at one another.

"Gentlemen, I have been very extravagant," continued Lorimer—"absurdly so; the fault has been, partly my own and partly yours."

Creditors look deprecatingly. Each creditor considers himself an exception.

"The sum total of my debts, I find, is £2,586 7s. 9d. Now, gentlemen, can you inform me how I am to pay this amount?"

Creditors look horribly puzzled, and cannot quite make out whether Mr. Littlegood is joking with them or not. No one likes to speak lest he should make a mistake.

“The question is, gentlemen, as I have always found you most civil, obliging, and accommodating ; as you have one and all repeatedly assured me that I need not at all trouble myself about payment ; that you were most anxious to oblige me in any way, and so forth, and that you felt honored by my custom,—the question, I say is, gentlemen, how much time will you grant me.”

Dismay sat on the countenances of the creditors ! Time ! Perhaps he only wanted time to run away ! Silence prevailed for a second or two. At length Mr. Snips, the richest man, and hitherto the most obsequious of all remarked :

“That he should have been very happy indeed, to have granted time, but really he had so many pressing calls at the moment, and one or two very heavy bills to provide for, that he positively *could not* grant any time at all—he *must* be paid *immediately*.”

Forthwith, all the other creditors made remarks to the same effect ; there was not one who had not a very heavy bill to provide for that very week, and *must* have his money.

“Very well, gentlemen,” said Lorimer ; “but supposing I have not got the money to pay you in full ? What do you say to a composition ?”

Creditors now all looked indignant. Mr. Filagree remarked that he made it a rule never to compromise a debt : he might lose it altogether, but he would not compromise it.

Hereupon every creditor also declared that *he* made it an invariable rule never to compromise, and each one tried to look as stern as Brutus, though he had never heard of that same Roman patriot.

Encouraged by this unanimity, Mr. Tile ventured to observe, that he must say, he thought it a very “*hodd* proceeding altogether—he couldn’t say he thought it very creditable

either. Young men had no business to go and get goods they couldn't pay for. If it wasn't dishonest it wasn't far off, in *his* opinion."

Mr. Snips perfectly agreed, and every other creditor agreed also, and little whisperings of "regular do," and such like phrases, passed freely about between them.

"Then I'm to understand, gentlemen, that you won't grant time, and you won't accept a compromise?" asked Lorimer.

All nodded assent.

"And, further, you consider that I've behaved very badly, and that you are all victims much to be pitied?"

Here each creditor detailed his own grievances, and considered that *he*, in particular, had been grievously ill-used.

"Thank you," said Lorimer, when he had heard them all. "Now allow me tell you my opinion of *you*. I consider you a set of mean, paltry, cringing, cowardly, dishonest scamps. Don't stir!" he shouted, fiercely, as one or two began to move, "or if you do, by Jove, I'll let my bull-dogs into the room, and you'll find their teeth worse than my tongue! You shall hear what I have to say. I have told you my opinion in general terms—you shall have it more explicitly. Your system is this: you find some young man whom you think to be rich; you fasten on him; you tease him for orders; you tempt him with your wares; you don't wait for him to *want* what you have to sell, but you force upon him things that you know he can never require; you seduce him by expatiating on the beauty, or the rarity, or the fashion of what you offer; you assure him that *any time* will do for payment, that that is the last thought that need trouble his head; you even leave goods with him for approval, in the hope that some of his friends may praise them enough to make him purchase them. You do all this so long as you feel perfectly sure of his means, you don't care a fig for the fact that you are tempting him to spend his money improperly; you charge him double the real value of everything you sell him, and at the very first glimpse of

anything wrong as regards his pocket, you pounce down upon him—a set of vile harpies ; you will pursue him not only to the last shilling of his means, but to imprisonment and, if you could, to death itself. If you are not ashamed of yourselves, it is because ‘damned custom’ has changed you from honest tradesmen (if such you ever were) to a set of thieves. Sit still, I say ! Your victims are weak-minded fools, such as I have been, who deserve some punishment for their folly ; but not half as much as *you* deserve who have not the same excuses. You are a set of pests to society, you respectable west-end tradesmen, and if you occasionally get bitten, it serves you right, or rather it gives you only a very small portion of the penalty you ought to pay for your meanness and utter want of conscientiousness.”

After this very magniloquent speech, which Lorimer delivered with immense energy, he sat still and surveyed the indignant and yet half-frightened visages of the assembled creditors. The whole scene, and his own part in it, were at last too much for his gravity ; and, to the intense surprise of every one, he burst out into a hearty fit of laughter.

“There’s not such a thing as a bull-dog on the premises,” he said, recovering himself ; and it is surprising how comparatively comfortable every creditor’s calves felt on hearing this assurance, and how much his courage began to rise. The men themselves began to rise also.

“Stay !” cried Lorimer : “have you got your receipts with you !”

Amazement sat on all—what could he mean ?

“Have you got your receipts with you ?” repeated Lorimer, “because I am going to pay you all.”

The surprise was indescribable ! Every one *had* got his receipt with him ; and Lorimer, in the most methodical and business-like way, paid each one in full.

Hereupon Mr. Snips, the tailor, thought it better to remark, that as far as paying went, Mr. Littlegood had behaved like a

gentleman, and as far as his remarks were concerned, he had no doubt that Mr. Littlegood was only having his joke.

"Nothing of the sort," cried Lorimer, who was just passing out of the room into the inner one. "I meant every word I said, and a great deal more. Gentlemen, I wish you all at the devil!" and he slammed the door behind him.

Creditors' faces very red; but intense satisfaction at pocketing the money.

"Move, please," said Job, who began sweeping the carpet with all his might, and raising a terrible dust.

Creditors hustled one another out of the room, and not one was ever again destined to darken the threshold of Mr. Lorimer Littlegood.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BENNOCH v. LITTLEGOOD AND ANOTHER.

IT is not pleasant to be baffled in any undertaking. All men feel this, and not men alone : see an old hound at fault, and watch with what redoubled energy he dashes eagerly in every direction to strike upon the scent again—you would find it even more difficult to call him off then than when in full cry—he does not like to be baffled.

Such was the case with Mr. Weazel : he had met with two very unpleasant obstacles in pursuing his scheme : he could not get proof of the marriage of Bennoch, senior, nor could he procure the aid of the present Bill Bennoch in the matter. Ever since his interview with that amiable individual, which ended in the latter's being carried home drunk, Mr. Bennoch had been confined to his house by a severe indisposition—to work.

His wife kept watch over him like a dragon ; not from affection, but to prevent people getting to him who might supply him with fresh drink or means of procuring it.

On one occasion when Weazel ventured into the court, and up to the door of the house in which the Bennochs lived, the virago fulfilled her promise to the little man by throwing a tub of soap-suds over him. He decamped amid the jeers and cheers of fifty small boys, cursing everything and everybody ; and when he reached home, Peg Todd thought he had been attempting to drown himself, and was very sorry that he had not succeeded.

At length it struck him as possible that if he could induce

Rose Bennoch to take his part, she might be able to persuade her mother to admit him to a quiet interview without fear of washing-tubs. And so he paid another visit to Mr. and Mrs. Crump's establishment, and teased poor little Rose into sending a letter to her mother, recommending Mr. Weazel as a kind and good man and one who had most important secrets to tell her. We may here observe that Rose was obliged to procure the assistance of one of her fellow prisoners to write the letter, not yet being able to handle the pen very effectively herself, though she had daily lessons in reading and writing at Lorimer's express stipulation, and paid for by him.

Mrs. Bennoch received the letter with delight as coming from poor little Rose, though she was not so much pleased at the recommendation of Mr. Weazel, whom she looked upon as a sneak and a coward. The day after the letter arrived, Weazel ventured to present himself again at the door.

"Come in," cried Mrs. Bennoch, with a very ill grace, having seen who was the visitor.

Weazel entered, bowing to her with as much politeness as if she were a duchess, and assuming his unpleasant grin.

"You'd better sit down—what have you got to say?" asked the woman.

"My dear ma'am, I've come to apprise you that your husband is entitled to a very large and handsome property," said Weazel.

"I don't believe a word of it," replied Mrs. Bennoch—"not a word: you look like a rogue, and it's my belief you are one."

Weazel turned very red, and felt slightly disconcerted: it was not pleasant to have his character so plainly written in his face that any washerwoman could read it.

"Excuse me," said he, "but you are naturally angry about that unfortunate occurrence with him," pointing to Bennoch, who was snoring on the bed, "but, I assure you, it was not my fault. I wanted to talk to him about this very matter, and he would not listen to me till I gave him some drink, and to

my great surprise, he swallowed it all, and became unable to understand what I was saying."

"I see, you've got the gift of the gab—go on," muttered the woman, sulkily.

"I won't bother you with a long story; it is sufficient to say that I possess most undoubted proofs of your husband's father having been defrauded of all his property, which ought now to belong to his son."

"And who *has* got the property?" she asked.

"Mr. Littlegood," replied Weazel.

"Mr. —— who!"

"Mr. Lorimer Littlegood," answered Weazel.

"What! he that's taken care of Rose?"

"The same."

"Then let him keep it: he's the best man in the world, and I would n't injure him for the finest fortune in it," she exclaimed.

"That's a very noble feeling of yours," answered Weazel, who thought it in reality a most absurd one; "but, you see, my dear ma'am, justice is justice. If the property is your husband's, why should Mr. Littlegood possess it?"

"I don't believe that it is my husband's," she cried.

"I tell you I can prove it," answered Weazel. "Now just think how pleasant it would be to have a fine fortune and live as a lady, instead of being constantly at work and in poverty."

"I'm used to both," she replied.

"Think of your son—heir to a good estate, instead of running about the streets."

"Mr. Littlegood's promised to get him into a good school—he'll do well enough," said she.

"Well, then, think of your beautiful daughter—a lady—a lady of good fortune, riding in her carriage amongst the greatest in the land, and more admired for her beauty than, perhaps any one of them!"

Weazel paused: he saw that this shot had taken effect: the

poor mother, who had no ambition for herself, could not restrain her aspirations for her daughter—her sweet, dear, beautiful Rose.

“ Fancy the temptations she will be exposed to in her present mode of life—how can you be sure she may not be led astray by some ——”

“ You liar !” cried the woman, with fearful vehemence : “ she will *never* go astray : she will *never* do wrong—God bless her —my own poor little Rose !” And she burst into a flood of tears, while her whole frame shook with the violence of her passion.

Weazel was frightened and at fault. He could not understand this intensity of maternal love, especially in one so apparently callous as the woman before him. He sat silent, not knowing what to say.

“ Go away,” she cried, but not with violence—rather as if shrinking from a temptation she feared : “ go away—we don’t want riches.”

“ Will *she* never reproach you for being the means of depriving her of the station and property she ought to have possessed ?” suggested the cunning little man.

“ No—never,” cried the mother : “ she would reproach no one for acting honestly, and, least of all, for refusing to rob the kind gentleman that’s been her preserver. Go away, I tell you—I hate the sight of you :—go away !”

She uttered this last warning with such fierce energy that Weazel thought it best to take the hint and decamp, lest the next one should be the practical one of soap-suds.

Baffled again ! How the little schemer chafed !

“ The fools !” he said : “ they don’t deserve a sixpence of the property : a drunken beast of a man and a she-devil of a woman. But it’s clear I *must* get it for them, or how can I line my own pockets ? Come what may, they *shall* have the property.” And he struck his table savagely as he said it.

After this, Mr. Weazel might be observed to take several

short trips into a remote part of the country, and to come back looking very weary and more thin and nervous than ever. Peg Todd, who was eternally packing a diminutive carpet-bag for him, wondered what had come over her master, and how he could possibly have grown so extravagant as to be constantly gadding about the country. It was a fine time for her, as she could safely slip out and amuse herself for an hour or two, though she one day stayed away a little too long, as Weazel returned home in her absence, and when she came back, he almost broke her neck, besides stopping her small allowance of food for a day. Peg philosophically regarded this as merely one of the necessary penalties for her pleasure, but was quite determined to incur the risk of a similar punishment on the very first opportunity.

About this time, Lorimer Littlegood received a letter from Mr. Bosher in these terms:—

“ MY DEAR SIR,

‘ The parties who threatened proceedings in regard to your property have this day actually commenced them. ‘ We shall, of course, take all proper steps for the defence: at the same time, I think it proper to warn you, that so great is the proverbial uncertainty of the law, that it is *possible* these people may succeed, in which case, you must prepare yourself for an entire loss of fortune. Certainly, a *little* portion of your late father’s property is not connected with the present proceedings; but that would not produce more than sufficient to support your mother in the humblest manner.’

“ What can the fellow mean ?” cried Lorimer. “ Jessie was right: there is something very odd in all this. Bosher tells me that this claim is all nonsense, and yet I *may* lose all my property through it. Uncertainty of the law, indeed! it must be an odd state of things if any rogue, without a particle of justice on his side, can turn the rightful owner out of his property. I’ll go down and see Bosher at once.”

He did so ; but there was little enlightenment to be gained from the interview ; for Bosher so smothered all his explanations in professional technicalisms that Lorimer could make nothing out of them. He asked to see the proceedings, and was handed some voluminous papers, which, on attempting to read, he found even more incomprehensible than his solicitor's explanations. Only, one fact struck him—that the proceedings appeared to be against Bosher as much as against himself. The attorney declared that that was a mere matter of form, but Lorimer was hardly convinced, and went away from the office with an unpleasant suspicion that there was a most important screw loose somewhere. His discussion with Jessie, who was so clear-headed and quick of apprehension, only confirmed his feeling of distrust.

Nor was he without great surprise at finding that the claimant of his estate was the father of the child he was befriending. He had never told Bosher of this last circumstance at all, but Jessie knew the whole history of it, and both agreed that it would be most wrong to endeavor to influence the father through Rose.

"In truth, Lorimer, if this Mr. Bennoch is really the rightful heir to the property, he ought to have it."

"Certainly, my dear sister ; and if I thought it belonged to him I would not detain it from him for a day. But Bosher assures me it is mine ; and what can I do ?"

"We can but wait," said Jessie, "till the trial shall have decided the question ; and, meantime, be prepared for the worst."

Weazel's spirits, meantime, were vastly improving. He sat up all one night, with little strips of paper before him, having a few words printed on them, and divided by lines into separate compartments. On these strips of paper he seemed to be exercising his handwriting ; for, after filling up words or names in them, he tore them up into small pieces, or burnt them.

Peg Todd, who wondered what he was so busy about, crept out of her bed more than once to look at him through the key-

hole. At length she saw a look of wonderful satisfaction on his face, and his habitual grin became almost demoniacal as he folded up carefully one of the little strips of paper on which he had been writing. As he did so, he looked cautiously round the room as though the walls had eyes as well as ears; and his own eyes seemed to glare so on the door that Peg almost fancied he had seen her through the keyhole. Then he took all his papers carefully from the table, and came towards the door to go to bed, while Peg slipped hurriedly and noiselessly into her back kitchen, and into bed, and lay as though sound asleep. After looking at her, Weazel ascended the stairs, and went to his sleeping-room. Again Peg slipped out of bed, and into the front kitchen, where Weazel had been sitting; there was just light enough from the expiring fire to enable her to see something white lying on the floor. It was one of the little printed slips of paper which Weazel had evidently let fall by accident; but there was no writing on it. Curiosity made the girl pick it up, and a love of secrecy and indefinable cunning induced her to fold it up and hide it in her clothes, as though it were a prize.

Next day Weazel again started off to a large country town, and searched the register in presence of the parish clerk.

"It's very odd," said Weazel; "I can't find the certificate of which this which I have is a copy—there's no such page as 289 in the book that I can see."

"No more there is!" cried the clerk, in surprise; "it is odd; there's been some roguery here. Let me look at your copy—that's right enough, surely. William Bennoch—Matilda May—Robert Jennings, Curate—it's all right, I'm sure. Of course Mr. Jennings was long before my time, but I know that's his signature; look, here it is—and here—and here. But what can have become of page 289? It's been stolen—that's clear."

"Bless me!" cried Weazel, "what shall I do? it's most important to prove this marriage; and suppose it's disputed?"

"But that certified copy of yours is as good as the original," said the clerk, "and I can easily get people who can prove that that's Mr. Jennings's signature."

"Can you?" cried Weazel; "then that'll do." And he cared nothing for the clerk's lamentations about page 289, which might contain certificates of which there were no copies in existence.

A law-suit is a terrible affair to hear of or read of. Certain we are that our readers would not thank us for a detail of the case of Bennoch *v.* Littlegood and another. They are interested (if interested at all) only in the result of it, which was, that Mr. William Bennoch was declared rightful owner of the estate, formerly the property of his father, and that Lorimer Littlegood was left a beggar.

Another result was, that to the astonishment of all Muddleford and half the County of Surrey, Mr. Bosher, the paragon of attorneys, was nowhere to be found!

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER RUNAWAY.

MR. BOSHER was not the only one of our *dramatis personæ* who mysteriously disappeared at the moment when the verdict was given in the great case of Bennoch v. Littlegood. Peg Todd was also found absent without leave, though, certainly, Peg was not flying from her creditors, for it is doubtful whether she could have procured credit for a penny loaf, nor was she running away in consequence of any little rogueries committed by her. Nevertheless, Mr. Weazel, all elated as he was at his grand success, was vexed to a degree that surprised himself, when he discovered the flight of his little hand-maiden. He first made a complete search through the house, to ascertain that Peg was not hidden in any mysterious corner or cupboard. He even shook his coats and trowsers, and peeped under the covers of the vegetable dishes, as if it were possible for Peg to be concealed in either. Having satisfied himself that she had really gone, his suspicions were next excited lest she should have robbed him, and so he took another survey of all his goods and chattels, but found everything in its place. Indeed, it appeared certain that Peg had walked off with only the clothes she had on her back, and about half of a very stale loaf of bread.

There was really no mystery in the matter, and though Mr. Weazel considered it a most extraordinary and unaccountable thing that the girl should leave his hospitable roof, Peg thought otherwise. Sick of ill-treatment, bad fare, worse clothes, and eternal taunts and threats, it occurred to the little creature to

run away, without the least notion of whither she should go, or how she should exist on her way. She deliberated for a short time whether she should help herself to the remains of the stale loaf or not, for Peg was not exactly a rogue at heart ; but she naturally came to the conclusion that as Weazel had done his best to starve her for the last year or two, it would be no great crime to help herself to a bit of his bread without leave. So Peg cut the loaf into slices, and stowed them away in mysterious parts of her scanty garments, and putting her dirty, paste-board coal-scuttle (which she naïvely imagined to be a bonnet) on her head, she left the house and ran through a dozen different streets before she had thought of which way to steer her course.

When Weazel came home, whistling with delight at his triumph—and Weazel's oldest friend never suspected him of being able to whistle before—he was much surprised and disgusted to find his eternal pulls at the bell, and thumps at the knocker entirely unheeded, especially as he had gone out without his latch-key. At length, after imprecating all beggarly girls together, and Peg Todd in particular, Mr. Weazel was compelled to climb over his own area railings, in doing which, he was seized by a policeman as a housebreaker, and only released on producing two neighbors to prove that he was entering his own premises. Getting in at the kitchen window, he found that Peg had gone, but it was not till a late hour of the night that he could persuade himself of the possibility of her not returning. In the evening, he indulged in rum and water to an unprecedented extent, and made the nearest approach to intoxication that he ever ventured on : for Mr. Weazel was too cautious a fellow to get drunk, and even in this present little excess, he took care to be completely alone.

Meantime, Peg wandered on through unknown streets, thinking the great city endless ; for, like every one running away, she was anxious to get out of London, though, in case of pursuit, the town itself offers a thousand advantages for conceal-

ment over the open country. Her little legs were pretty well tired, when she at length found herself toiling up a long, steep road that bore some traces of a country aspect, but Peg did not know that she was ascending Highgate Hill, and was on what used to be the great high-road to the North, before railways supplanted mail-coaches.

A beggar-girl (and Peg looked like one) is no very remarkable object, thanks to our civilization, so that her appearance excited no one's attention. Once a passer by, having an inconvenient copper weighing down the pocket of his paletot, bestowed it on Peg, and thought he had done an act of charity. The girl took the coin, which she had not asked for, in surprise, and never thanked the donor. It put a new idea into her head, however, which was that she would turn professional beggar, and try to pick up a livelihood along the road. Henceforth, therefore, she bobbed a curtsy to every one she met, and held out her hand, and so successful was she, that, by the time darkness began to overtake her, she found herself possessed of the magnificent sum of eight pence half-penny. Visions of hot suppers and pints of beer actually began to flit across her brain; for Peg had no very correct notion of the value of money, Mr. Weazel having taken excellent care never to send her to market for the smallest trifle, lest she should cheat him some day of a half-penny.

It was growing very dark, and Peg was tired. She was not hungry also, because she had eaten more bread than usual, so that really the hot supper vision may be regarded as a piece of spontaneous *gourmandise* on the part of the young traveller; but it was clearly necessary to have some place to lie in during the night.

She stopped: there was a country-built public house by the road-side, one of those cosy, warm, quiet looking hostgeries that really are of genuine English origin. There were two bow windows with red curtains, and between the windows was a doorway, entering which was seen a bar on the right hand

side, with a small tap-room in front of it, and on the left the more aristocratic "parlor," with its sanded floor, round tables with legs ending in gouty-looking feet, strong Windsor chairs, sporting prints of impossible hunting scenes, when riders wore tails to their own hair and cut off those of their horses; and the inevitable, before-mentioned, crimson curtains in the window. Before the house was the sign-post with the swinging sign-board representing George the Third in a pig-tail as big as that appended to the renowned statue at Charing Cross, and with an appropriate expression of fat imbecility in his face. In front of the sign-post again was a long trough where a wagoner was refreshing his team with water *à discretion*, and a tantalizingly small portion of hay.

Peg approached the doorway, and seeing the plump-looking landlady inside, she bobbed another curtsy, and held out her hand.

"Go away, go away; don't come begging here," cried the landlady; "or, stay, perhaps you *may* be hungry, here are some victuals," and she handed Peg a lump of bread and a bit of broken meat, which would certainly have satisfied any girl's appetite, but which seemed to the good-natured woman, who could dispose of a pound of rump-steak for her own supper, to be small enough.

Peg curtsied again, but there was something too imposing in the landlady's appearance for her to venture to ask her for a night's shelter.

"Holloa, little 'un!" cried an ostler, who saw her moving away; "What are you up to?"

Peg scarcely knew how to answer this lucid question, so she simply said, "She wasn't up to nothing," which was at least as intelligible as the question.

"Where do you live when you're at home?" asked the ostler.

"I haven't got any home, and I don't live anywhere," was the reply.

“Crikey!” cried the ostler, with a peculiar whistle, “why you ain’t brown enough for a gipsy, and them’s the only folks, except the tramps, that don’t live nowhere. You’re a young tramp, if you *are* one.”

“I ain’t a tramp,” said Peg, who did not know the meaning of the word, but conceived it to be a term of reproach of some kind.

“Where are you a going, then?” asked the ostler, with the inquisitiveness of his class.

“Oh, ever so far,” answered Peg.

“North?” asked the ostler.

“Yes,” said Peg, who knowing nothing of the points of the compass, thought north would do as well as any other way.

“But where are you going to sleep?” asked the ostler.

This was a puzzler to Peg.

“Don’t know, I suppose,” said the ostler; “thought so. Now look here, there’s a loft where I could give you a shake down for the night, if you don’t mind a rat or two running about. They won’t bite *you*, because they likes corn better, though they ain’t always comfortable bed folks neither. How’sever we can’t have all as we likes,” continued the philosophic ostler; “leastways, unless we’ve got no end of money, and I don’t suppose that’s your case no more than mine.”

Peg was expressing her perfect acquiescence in the last remark of the ostler, when a third person joined them. This was the wagoner, who had been taking a glass of ale in the tap-room.

“What are you a sayin’ to the little un, eh, Bill?” asked he. “She’s a tiny sort of a body, *she* is.”

“She’s a going ever so far, she says,” replied Bill, “and she ain’t got no place to sleep in, so I was offering her my loft, if she don’t mind rats.”

“But she *do* mind rats; in course she *do*, poor little body,” said the wagoner, kindly. “If she’s going North, she’s welcome to a lift in my wagon—there’s no rats there, and she’ll

sleep in it like a bed. "Would you like to go, little girl?" he asked.

"Yes, please," answered Peg, who somehow or other took an unaccountable fancy to the wagoner from his looks, or his voice, or the kindness of his manner.

"All right then—no, stay a minute," said the wagoner, when he had lifted the girl into the wagon—"stay a bit," and he lumbered back into the inn, and coming out with a small mug of beer, he handed it to Peg. "Drink that—every drop on it—don't be afeard; it'll make you sleep nicely."

A minute or two afterwards the wagoner's whip was cracking, his voice was crying the peculiar "hee-whoop," which is supposed to be most intelligible to the equine race, the wagon was lumbering heavily along the road, and Peg Todd was trying to make herself comfortable for her night's rest. She succeeded so well, that before a quarter of an hour had passed, the child was in a deep slumber.

When Peg awoke in the morning, she was surprised to find the wagon stopping, as she at first thought, at the very spot whence they started the night before; but it was not so, though the present road-side inn was very much like the other. Indeed, when she looked round, she saw that she was much farther in the country, as few houses were visible, but fields of all kinds, and hedgerows, and cattle, and sheep.

"Halloa, lass! awake at last, he? A mortal power o' sleep you've had, lass, and it 'll do you good," cried the jolly wagoner, coming up to her. "Now get down and come in here and get a bit o' breakfast;" and he lifted Peg Todd to the ground and led her into the little tap-room, where an immense slice of bacon, some brown bread, and a jug of hot milk were laid. It is not too much to declare that this was by far the most luxurious meal Peg had ever partaken of, since the death of the old man who protected her before she passed into the hands of our friend Mr. Weazel.

She ate with an appetite that almost surprised the jolly wagoner himself.

"Have you got any money to pay for all that, lass?" asked he, with a grin, when Peg had finished.

Peg produced her eight-pence halfpenny.

"Ha, ha! bravo, lass,—put it back in your pocket," said he, laughing, "old Tom ain't rich, but he can pay for a wee thing like you."

When they were starting again, old Tom (as he called himself) was about to lift Peg back to her place in the wagon, but she begged to be allowed to walk for some time: so they trudged on, side by side.

"Tell 'ee what it is, lass," said Tom: "you're too young to be going about like this; where's father and mother?"

"I ain't got any," answered Peg.

"Dead, eh?" said Tom, sadly.

"No," said Peg, "I never had none."

"Never had no father nor mother—haw, haw! that's a good 'un," laughed old Tom: "Stop a bit," he said, seriously; "I see—a fondling, eh?"

"That's it," said Peg; "that's what grand-dad said I was."

"Who was he?" asked Tom.

Peg explained as much as she knew of her history, and Tom listened gravely, and with deep interest to the narrative.

"And so this little bad man worn't kind to you, eh?" asked Tom, at the conclusion of the story.

"I hate him!" cried the girl, fiercely.

"Hold hard!" said Tom, "that won't do: we musn't hate no one—leastways if we can help it,—which ben't easy always, certainly."

After this there was a pause. Peg had talked more the last few minutes than in all the previous two or three years, and naturally wanted breath, while Tom was exerting his poor brain to devise some plan for aiding the girl permanently.

"Should you like to live with a parish-clerk?" asked Tom.

Peg declared truly that she was perfectly unacquainted with the profession in question; and certainly, on second thoughts, Tom confessed to himself that it had not much to do with the point.

"What I mean is this," said Tom: "I know a man and his wife in a big town I'm going to, who want a house girl. The man's a shoemaker and a parish-clerk, and he's a kind-hearted man too, and his wife's as good a body as need be, and I'm sure if they took you they'd not starve you nor ill-treat you no-how: but would you work hard?"

"Yes," said Peg, "I'm used to it."

"And you'd be honest, eh?"

"I never took nothing but the bit of bread I told you of," said Peg, rather indignantly.

"Poor lass!" said Tom, patting the dirty bonnet kindly. "Well I tell you what it is, if Crank ain't got a girl by when we get to his place, I'll try to make him take you—that's the best thing *I* can say."

Peg thanked him as well as she was able, and next evening they arrived at the town where her fate for the present was to be decided.

Old Tom took her to the house of his friends, and said everything he could in her favor. Indeed he said a great deal more than he could possibly have known, but all of which he thoroughly believed, for honest-hearted Tom's faith was large, and what he believed he fancied he knew also.

"She's very small," observed Mrs. Crank.

"Little and good," replied old Tom.

"True enough;" said Mr. Crank, who was of the smallest build himself,—"She'll do."

And so Peg Todd was engaged as maid-of-all-work in the establishment of Mr. Crank, bootmaker and parish-clerk in the town of Tweford.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE LITTLEGOODS BORE REVERSE OF FORTUNE.

To awake and find one's self famous must be an exhilarating and glorious sensation ; to find one's self suddenly possessed of a fortune must be almost equally delightful ; but, in intensity, though in the opposite direction, perhaps both sensations are surpassed by that of being suddenly beggared. It is said that great griefs are never felt in all their fulness at first, and especially is this true of the most sacred of griefs, that which arises from the death of those dear to us : we cannot then realize our loss all at once, and, therefore, we cannot realize all our sorrow. This may also be the case as regards loss of fortune, to some extent, but it is not altogether so. In thinking of the dead whom we loved in life, we are enjoying one of the most exquisite of the pleasures of memory ; and though we mourn that we have lost so much beauty, affection, or goodness, yet the very recollection of those qualities is, in some sense, a balm to the wounded heart. We will not presume to place the grief which we experience for mere loss of fortune beside such a grief as this ; but yet, in one sense, it is more painful—it has nothing to mitigate it. It is no consolation, but a downright aggravation of our sorrow, to recall the pleasures that wealth purchased for us and compare our present penury and helplessness with our condition then.

Doubtless the philosopher—with his feet on his Turkey carpet, his bottle of claret at his elbow, and his fire burning cheerfully—will speak contemptuously of the idea of mourning over the mere loss of wealth. It is very absurd : and yet

there is not one who would not be guilty of the absurdity to-morrow. Our friend, Lorimer Littlegood, was neither philosopher nor hero, and, therefore, he was sadly cast down at his sudden reverse of fortune. Perhaps he would have borne it better, if not almost with indifference, had he been led to expect it as probable, but old Bosher having all along assured him that Bennoch's claim was a mere trumped up one to extort money, he never had any serious fears of the result. On attending the hearing of the cause (which Mr. Bosher took care *not* to do), Lorimer soon became convinced of the villainy of Mr. Bosher, the invalidity of his own title to the property, and the utter beggary which awaited him.

At first he was violent in his grief, he wished he could get hold of Bosher and strangle him ; he wished he himself might be seized with a violent illness and die ; and many other such ridiculous ideas. By degrees he began to suspect that he was acting very absurdly, and behaving rather like a coward than a man of sense. After all he was young, well-educated, strong in body, and sound in mind. He was no worse off than ten thousand others of his age and birth ; he must trace out some new course of life and pursue it steadily, and live in hopes of realizing an independence for himself. Before night he was tolerably quiet and collected.

It was two days, however, before he could summon up resolution enough to go down to his sister and mother.

“Poor Jessie!” he exclaimed to himself, as he sat in the railway carriage, “how I dread to think of her fate ! What a selfish brute I have been to be fretting over my own loss of fortune when she, a helpless girl, will suffer ten thousand times worse than I. True she has a home, for the cottage *is* ours, and the magnificent income of one hundred a year ! What a sum to live on ! about as much as I have spent in——oh ! hang it, I shall go mad if I conjure up the ghosts of my own follies and extravagances to haunt me. How truly retribution follows crime ; and how absurd to suppose because we

do not *see* the punishment of many offenders, that therefore they do not *suffer* any. I am convinced that every evil deed bears with it the germs of its own punishment, as invariably as the flower carries the seed in its heart, whose gradual development is its own destruction."

For the first time in his life Lorimer approached the cottage with a sensation of dread; but scarcely had he entered the gravel road leading to the hall door, before the latter was thrown open, and Jessie rushed out joyously to welcome him.

"My dear, dear brother, I am so pleased to see you," she exclaimed. "It's very kind of you to come to us, just at the moment when I want your assistance too. Come in, come in."

Lorimer was completely astounded. Either Jessie was a wonderful actress, or she was a wonderful woman, to appear or to be thus indifferent to reverse of fortune. Indeed, she appeared rather elated by it than otherwise. Certainly she could not be assuming a cheerfulness she did not feel, for she was too natural and single-minded for such a part; and yet was it possible that she should really contemplate poverty without fear?

"Are you not well, Lorimer dear?" she asked. "You look pale and haggard. Surely, you naughty boy, *you* have not been fretting about the loss of property, have you? I shall not believe that, even if you tell me so."

"Indeed, Jessie, then you must remain incredulous, in spite of its being a fact, that I have fretted terribly—I am ashamed to think how much—over this dreadful reverse."

"Don't call it a dreadful reverse, my dear brother," cried Jessie. "Depend upon it, there is nothing so likely to frighten us as giving anything an ugly name. What is a change of fortune, after all? and why should you repine at it? Remember that I always told you that your own good and noble qualities would never come into play while you led a life of inglorious ease. Do not repine at what will make you a better man."

Poverty can only degrade the naturally wicked ; to the good, it is only the fire that purifies the silver from the dross that incrusted it."

"But I am not of the good, Jessie, I fear," said Lorimer, with a sigh.

"Time will prove that," answered Jessie, with confidence. "Meantime, brother dear, *I* have firm faith in you ; and believe me, that if you will always keep that one fact before your eyes, it will save you from many a temptation—not because it is I, your sister, who have confidence in you, but for the moral influence produced by the consciousness that there is at least one who will think no ill of you. *Trust breeds Truth.*"

"God bless you, my darling sister ! Surely never nobler heart beat in woman's breast," cried Lorimer, embracing her. "But indeed, Jessie, I have latterly been mourning more for your fate than my own."

"Then throw off your mourning, and wear a 'suit of sables,' as Hamlet says (though I never could tell exactly what he means) ; for I assure you I am much happier now than I was before. I have something to do, and I was never made for inactivity."

"Something to do ?" asked Lorimer. "Why, what can you mean ?"

"I will tell you what I *don't* mean first," answered Jessie, laughing. "I *don't* mean that I have taken a maid-of-all-work's place, nor a cook's, nor a housemaid's, because really I *don't* think I'm competent for the duties of either. I haven't thought it necessary to turn up my sleeves, leave my hair undressed, and scrub the door-step, by way of showing that I can endure poverty. I have not advertised for plain needle-work, because I'm a very bad sempstress ; and I *don't* believe any lady would wear a petticoat, or any gentleman a shirt, made by my hands. I have not written to any theatrical manager, London or provincial, to offer him the bare chance of securing my inestimable services as an actress of anything from Lady Macbeth to a pert *soubrette*—"

"What *have* you done?" cried Lorimer, laughing, and interrupting her.

"I have simply called on most of our best friends in the neighborhood who have children, and expressed my willingness to educate their daughters at twenty pounds a year each."

"And they?" asked Lorimer.

"They have promised me, among them, just ten pupils, which (you see I am 'getting up' my arithmetic) will give me two hundred pounds a year. This, added to our mother's one hundred pounds, will give us a sufficient income to live on, and to offer a home to my dear brother as often and as long as he will accept it at our hands."

"You are a wonderful girl, Jessie," said Lorimer, looking at her with delight and affection.

"I am nothing of the kind," answered his sister, "and I don't wish to be flattered. But I want your assistance, Lorimer."

"How so?" he asked.

"To help me make out a list of school books. Many of those used in girls' schools are such wretched things—bare facts and dates, which may be crammed into the head by force, but must inevitably tumble out again, like the articles in a badly-packed carpet-bag, and cannot be of any earthly use even while they remain in it. Now, I am sure that there must be far better educational books published—books that will *lead* a child forward through the subject it professes to teach, and not merely throw facts at him, to bewilder his brain and distress his memory."

"Upon my word, Jessie," said Lorimer, laughing, "you will distinguish yourself in your new career; you seem already to have got a strong theory of your own on the subject of education."

"You are only quizzing me, I know," answered Jessie; "but I certainly have thought a great deal on the subject, and it seems to me no very difficult one to comprehend. I cannot

help fancying that nature and common sense are the best authorities we can consult in the matter. There is now a great outcry for an extension of education—I don't mean educating more people, but making education embrace more subjects. To me there seems much error in this, and I firmly believe that more reformation is needed in the method of imparting knowledge than in the multiplication of its branches. Does it not strike you that the present is a very frivolous age? Don't you think a great proportion of even clever people have a wonderfully superficial acquaintance with everything they pretend to talk about, and a bantering tone which is quite as much assumed to hide shallowness as to exhibit wit?"

"We certainly live in an age when it is the fashion to laugh at everything," said Lorimer.

"Yes, because it is easier to laugh at anything than to comprehend it. Now, to my poor brain, it seems that this very shallowness and love of ridicule (I do not say they are always inseparable) arise from no deterioration of the intellect, but from its defective cultivation, and because it has never been trained to exercise and strengthen its powers by really studying any one subject, but has been satisfied with scraps and facts collected from all the histories and sciences known to the world."

"Bravo!" cried Lorimer. "Spoken like a professor, and reasoned like a sage."

"Well, I shall talk no more about it," said Jessie, "as you only laugh at me, and certainly I have prosed away enough. However, I intend to put my theory into practice with my pupils, and see if I cannot form minds and characters at the same time. And now, sir, come here; take that pen and paper, and write down the list."

While they were thus employed, and were in the midst of a merry laugh over some remark of Jessie's, Mrs. Littlegood, who had only just risen, entered the room, and stared in surprise at the happy faces of her two children.

"My dear boy!" she exclaimed, as Lorimer rose and em-

braced her. “And has Jessie set *you* mad, too?” she added; “for I find you both laughing as if something very delightful had just happened, instead of our being all ruined.”

“Jessie says we must not call things ugly names, and then we shall not be so alarmed at them,” replied Lorimer; “and really, my dear mother, I begin to be quite of her opinion, for I came down here in terribly bad spirits, and this little witch has so talked me into sense, that I almost feel as if I had just come into a fortune instead of having lost one.”

“Ah, that wicked Mr. Bosher!” said the old lady, with a sigh.

Mortimer muttered something, which may have been a naughty word; we will hope it was not, as no one heard it.

“He has done *me* an act of kindness, at all events,” said Jessie.

“How so?” asked Lorimer.

“By going away,” she answered. “I never felt happy in that man’s presence—I always feared him and distrusted him; in short, he was as disagreeable to me as a sleek cobra capella would be crawling about my room, and making me dread the moment when he would strike.”

“We shall hear of more ruins caused by that man’s villainy,” cried Mrs. Littlegood.

“Let us hope, my dearest mother, that they will fall on none less able to bear them than ourselves,” answered Jessie. “We have a house to shelter us, and an independence, even in our poverty, which many, many would envy: two of us are young, and full of health, and hope, and energy; and it will be strange indeed if we cannot make you, the third, happy and comfortable.”

“God bless you, my children!” said the old lady, weeping; while Lorimer gently stole his sister’s hand into his, and pressed it warmly.

And that night Lorimer Littlegood slept soundly, and woke next morning with a light heart. The battle of life was to be fought, and he was nerved for the strife.

CHAPTER XXI.

BILL BENNOCH ENTERTAINS HIS FRIENDS IN AN UNEXPECTED MANNER.

WE need scarcely say that William Bennoch, Esq., was now a very great man in the estimation of himself and all his particular friends and acquaintances. Indeed, the only one who seemed disposed to dispute his greatness was his wife, who considered him still a brute, though a rich one. Mr. Weazel was also, perchance, of the same opinion ; but Weazel was a great deal too prudent to express his sentiments, as he was deeply interested in keeping on the best of terms with his friend. Of course Mr. Weazel had taken very good care of himself, and had persuaded Bennoch to hand him as much ready money as he could decently ask for under all sorts of pretences ; for Bennoch was not naturally an avaricious man ; he was simply a confirmed drunkard, with all the low and brutal vices necessarily connected with that character. Still, with the cunning common to madmen and drunkards, he was often suspicious that he was being “done ;” and on such occasions Mr. Weazel met his match, and found the purse-strings immovable.

The first move made by the Bennochs was into a good house, which was furnished for them at the shortest notice, by those accommodating upholsterers, Messrs. Marquetry and Co., who obligingly crammed their rooms with everything that was expensive and useless, and made out a bill whose dimensions astonished Bill, and frightened his wife, as it amounted to about a year’s income of their new fortune.

Never did any one feel more uncomfortable than Wm. Ben-

noch, Esq., in his new abode. The nuisance of having to wear clean linen, and wash his face and hands, was bad enough ; but not to be allowed to smoke his pipe in the drawing-room, or spit on the carpet, was quite insufferable. He never had much fancy for wine—even the strong, thick, heavy mixture dignified by the name of “fruity port,” which he had occasionally tasted in a public-house parlor ; but now that his cellar was stocked with choice vintages of France, Spain, and Portugal, he hated it more than ever, as it did not burn in his throat, nor make him drunk within anything like a reasonable time. By degrees he took to brandy-and-water, and from thence he passed by easy stages to that most diabolical of all liquids—London gin. To have unlimited means of procuring this, might seem to be a drunkard’s paradise ; but after all, the load of respectability was too heavy to be borne patiently on the shoulders of such a blackguard as our friend Bill.

Mrs. Bennoch played her new *rôle* of lady much better. She felt rather awkward in silk dresses and gloves, and had a natural propensity to turn up her sleeves, as if she were going to drive her arms into the washing-tub, which she found it difficult to control. Neither did her temper altogether improve ; and when Bill made a beast of himself (which was not much less frequently than of yore), she missed the soap-suds to throw over him terribly, and had to give vent to her rage in an additional quantity of vituperation, coming clearly within the category of “Billingsgate.”

Rose was the unhappiest of all. She did not enjoy the change of life in the least ; on the contrary, she was constantly recalling the fact that their present prospect was built on the ruin of the only good and true friend she had known. The child was daily growing in sense and feeling ; but the new scenes in which she lived served rather to retard her progress than to aid it. Her dread of her father, and her half fear of even her mother, did not diminish, and with their return came the strange reserve, the love of solitude, and the stealthy, and

almost cunning, actions which distinguished her at home in the dirty little alley.

Her mother, to do her justice, was not without many qualms of conscience at living on what she could scarcely forbear from regarding as the property of one who had done such kindness to her loved child. But Weazel's ingenuity, though she still hated the man, removed many of these impressions; and she could not but find the change from eternal labor and want, to ease and plenty, a most agreeable one.

As for young Dick, he was transformed by tailor, hosier, and bootmaker, into such wonderful contrast to his former self that certainly his oldest friends would have failed to recognize him. Dick did not altogether appreciate the metamorphosis; and the veto laid on alleys and chuck-farthing was regarded by him with as much disgust as the prohibition of pipes and spitting in the drawing-room by his father.

The latter, however, hit upon an expedient for remedying his own sufferings in part. Somebody had told him that every gentleman had a room to himself—a studio, or sanctum, where he might do what he liked, and into which womankind was never admitted. So Bill determined to furnish a studio.

First of all he laid down the thickest of Turkey carpets, for Bill had no objection to carpets themselves, but merely to being prevented from spitting on them. Then he had a great, strong, oak table, three or four chairs of similar build, with loose cushions, a small boiler to keep up an unlimited supply of hot water, a few prize-fight prints on the wall, a sofa as wide as a bed to roll on, and a bookcase filled—not with books, but tobacco and pipes, brandy, gin, rum, and whiskey, and a large supply of strong tumblers. This was Bill's studio—and he passed the greater portion of his time at his studies.

With all these delights, however, he was not a happy man. He missed his old associates—not that he loved them, or that they cared an iota for him, but from mere habit. He was accustomed to them, and could not be comfortable without their

noise, and their rows, and their oaths; though even Bill was proud to exhibit his quondam friends in his new house to the critical gaze of servants and dependents. At length he resolved to give them all a grand entertainment, or, as he termed it, "a jolly blow out." So keeping himself moderately sober for once, he sallied forth, and called at the forge, and in the old alley, and sought out the most disreputable fellows in both places (they being his most intimate friends) and invited them all to a supper at the "Pig and Vampire," the landlord of which was profuse in expressions of delight at beholding Bill's charming countenance once more, and renewed his congratulations on the subject of the fortune.

The important evening arrived at last, and with it arrived also the guests—punctually at 8 P. M. Bill was greeted with the noisiest demonstrations of affection, and three cheers were raised in his honor. Already he had been at work in his studio, and was just getting on to the high road to exhilaration. The table was spread with a clean cloth—a luxury that probably only one of the party ever partook of elsewhere. Bill assumed the chair with grand importance—the dishes were brought in—the covers removed, and the feast displayed. It was plentiful, if not refined in taste. There was a tremendous goose stuffed with sage and onions, a sirloin of beef, a boiled leg of mutton and turnips, a large dish of tripe and onions, a rabbit pie, and a huge piece of boiled bacon—enough, at all events, for the select party of eight, who sat down to it.

There was not much conversation while the eating was going on—mouths being more profitably employed, for every man ate as if his life depended on being able to dispose of some perfectly enormous quantity of animal food in a given small space of time. Beer was drank by the quart, and out of the pewter. Bill offered them wine if they liked it, but one and all voted it poor stuff, and not to be compared with Barclay and Perkins—*improved* by the landlord of the "Pig and Vampire."

When every body had eaten till he felt as if he should never be able to eat any more as long as he lived—a sensation known occasionally to people of the ancient aldermanic class—the cloth was removed, and tumblers, hot water, and spirits brought in. Then began the real business of the evening.

First, one Mr. Thomas Short, a blacksmith, arose to propose the health of the giver of the feast ; which he did somewhat as follows :—

“ Gen’lemen—I rise to give yer an ’ealth—the ’ealth of one who’s a swell now, but who aint proud for all that—for he’s come here to see his old friends—and we *hare* his friends, every one of us—(great cheering)—and he’s give us a supper, which I calls a reg’lar out and outer. And it’s my ’pinion he’s a brick, every inch of him ; and I ’ope he’ll ’scuse me for saying he’s a brick, (cheers—and a nod from Bill, who also muttered, “ Go it, old cock) and so, gen’lemen, I gives for his jolly good ’ealth, and many of ’em.”

Tremendous approbation followed—every man drank his tumbler of grog right off, (“ no heel-taps” being vociferated) and then every man thumped the table with his glass as if to test its strength.

Bill arose to return thanks, and held on pretty tight to the table in doing so, for he was conscious of feeling a little unsteady on his legs. Assuming an air of great gravity, he rolled his eyes a little, and leant his head forward—then he hiccupped, and then he winked his eye, which last feat was applauded as a great piece of wit. He opened his mouth once and seemed to be going to speak, but no words came out. His friends were all attention, but, just as he opened his mouth again, he slipped back into his seat, and from his seat he slipped to the floor. Two or three sprang to pick him up.

“ Holloa, Bill ! What is it ? all right, old fellow, eh ?” they cried, but no response came from Bill.

“ He’s *very* drunk,” said one.

“ Pull off his coat and loose his collar,” said another.

"Blowed if he aint precious bad," said another.

"Lor 'bless ye, I've see'd Bill a precious sight worse often enough," cried a fourth : "he'll just get up a laugh at ye, by-and-bye."

"He don't move much, and he do look 'orrid pale, a. y how," suggested the one who had pulled off Bill's cravat.

"I'm blessed if he aint dying," said one. "I see Jim Spraggs go off just like that."

There was a cry of horror at this suggestion, and the tables were thrust aside, and all surrounded Bill.

"Call in the landlord," said one, and four or five rushed out to do so.

The landlord came in with his cap on his head, a. l his pipe in his mouth, and looked at Bill, as he was held in a sitting position on the floor, with his head in the hands of one of the men. The landlord looked, he pulled his pipe from his mouth, drew a long breath, and said,

"He's dead!"

"Run for a doctor," some one cried ; and as Bill, or Bill's estate could pay for one, they were not long in procuring him.

The doctor felt his pulse, listened at his heart, and said,

"Dead, quite dead!"

And the drunken fellows around felt a cold shudder pass over them, and could not withdraw their gaze from Bill's bloated, livid face. And each one thought his own turn might be next, and each one made a vow (to be broken within a week) to abstain from liquor henceforth.

And many another drunkard shook in his shoes when he heard how "staggering Bill" had died.

CHAPTER XXII.

PEG TODD MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.

PEG TODD began to feel herself a most important personage in her new situation. She was cook, housemaid, waiting-maid, laundress, and nurse. Certainly, this access of dignity was not without its drawbacks, in the shape of hard work and occasional vexations. Mr. and Mrs. Crank had two children—one a young gentleman of five years old, and the other a “baby” of two. Peg, being one of the most diminutive of her sex, looking far from imposing when enacting the *rôle* of nurse, carrying a baby almost as big as herself in her arms, and vainly attempting to drag along the refractory Master Crank, who, having a spirit of his own, was particularly fond of displaying it against his nurse in the public streets.

“Come along with yer, yer young imp! I never see such a limb in my life,” Peg would cry, giving Master Bobby a vigorous tug at the same time.

“Ooh! ooh!” Bobby would roar. “I’ll tell mother. Ooh! ooh!”

“Aah! aah!” in a shriller key screamed “baby,” from sympathy with its dear brother.

“Drat the children!” cried Peg, struggling along, every inch of progress violently disputed by Bobby.

“How dare you ill-treat the child?—dragging its arms off like that!” exclaimed some tender mother, passing by, and fancying the “dear child” must have been hurt by Peg.

“It ain’t no business of yours!” roared Peg, furious at this attack from a stranger, and conscious of her own innocence.

"You saucy young hussy!" said the tender-mother stranger.
"I'll tell your mistress, that I will."

"So you may," cried Peg.

"Ooh! ooh!" went Bobby, and "Aah! aah!" went baby again; and Peg perhaps wished she could fling them both into the gutter, and run away, she was so sick of it.

When she at length reached home on these occasions, Bobby usually lodged a complaint against her for cruelty, to which Peg responded by a counter charge of insubordination and other transgressions, which resulted in Master Bobby getting a smack on the ear and no sugar in his milk-and-water.

Nor was Peg the most accomplished of cooks. She could never succeed in boiling a potatoe to the satisfaction of anybody but herself; but then she was very easily satisfied indeed. A steak she generally managed to dry up like a piece of sole-leather, or else to burn it black outside and have it of a most unpleasant purple inside. She never attempted a pie-crust but once, and then even Peg confessed that it was difficult to get your teeth out of it when once you had got them in.

As a housemaid, Peg might be said to excel. She could scrub floors, and sweep carpets, and clean windows, and rub furniture all day, with great apparent gusto. How she contrived to escape suffocation from the dust of her own raising,—how she ever managed to get off the several layers of inky dirt which she accumulated on her own face after these grand efforts, it is impossible for us even to surmise; but certainly Peg managed it in some mysterious way of her own.

Mrs. Crank was a good sort of woman, with a mania for tidiness—a most unpleasant sort of mania to come in contact with. Woe be to the man that protests against it! he is sure to be told that he is a slovenly, careless fellow, whose long bachelor hood has led him into frightful habits; or if the lady be of a less polished order of society, she will probably swear that he likes "everything in a muddle." Now, Peg had no more notion of tidiness than a young bear. She had no objection to

scrubbing things and cleaning them ; but, as to putting them into the exact places where they ought to be, it was altogether out of her line ; and so she had many a lecture and a lesson, and it was a long time before she profited by them.

Mr. Crank himself, bootmaker and parish clerk, was a quiet, easy-going man, who literally and figuratively "stuck to his last," except when parish affairs called him from it. He took very little notice of Peg, except when his spouse was lecturing the girl in his presence, when he usually struck in with his favorite sentence, "Oh, she'll do!" In fact, Mr. Crank's philosophy was summed up in those words—he thought everything and everybody "would do" somehow. Whether his dinner was badly cooked, his shirt badly washed, his new coat wouldn't fit, his wife was out of temper, or his children out of health, Mr. Crank settled it that they would all do in time. A very happy philosophy this, and one deserving of some cultivation. How many things fret and vex us, that would pass unnoticed if we adopted Mr. Crank's views. How often we waste time, and money, and labor of body and brain, to attain something which we don't really need, or which we could do perfectly well without, if we would only make up our minds that what we already had "would do, somehow." But, why talk of philosophy ? Who hopes to teach it ? who expects to make the world one whit wiser than it is ? who expects, by precept or practice, to restrain one act of folly ? who supposes that any reasoning or teaching will make men cultivate true happiness, instead of seeking for honor and glory, wealth, vanity, and vexation of spirit ?

"'Tis a mad world, my masters !" Ay, and so it will continue till its end, despite of all that Wisdom may strive to teach it to the contrary.

The town in which the Cranks lived was a large one, but not large enough to be free from the gossip of a country town. Everybody knew everybody, and, what was worse, everybody's business. Even so humble and insignificant a person-

age as Peg could not escape remarks. Who was she? where did she come from? how did the Cranks get her? Such were a few of the questions which the neighbors of Mr. and Mrs. Crank were fond of asking.

They would have been very clever indeed to have got much out of Peg in the way of information; for her long habit of silence, coupled with her present desire of concealment, quite closed her lips. She felt inwardly convinced that if ever Weazel fell in with her, he would pounce upon her, and carry her off as remorselessly as a hawk does a tomtit or a field-mouse. She even avoided all the little men whose faces she could not see, and whose build resembled that of her former master. When she had been a month or two in her situation, she had one day a great fright.

She was walking, or rather struggling along with Master Bobby and baby, when she was accosted by a man in an uniform which she at first took to be that of a policeman, but saw afterwards that it was much smarter. The man who spoke to her was, in fact, a railway guard. He was a very tall man, and Peg remembered him at once as Mr. Peck—the elder brother of our friend Job—whom she had seen several times at Weazel's house.

"Holloa! little one. Why, you're Mr. Weazel's little servant, ain't you?" asked Mr. Peck, in a cheery, good-natured voice.

"No, I ain't," said Peg, doggedly, but feeling dreadfully frightened.

"Well, you used to be then, eh?" continued Peck.

"No, I usedn't—I never heerd of such a person," said Peg.

"Oh, oh!" cried Peck, "I'm afraid you tell stories, my little wench; but you needn't be afraid of *me*—I wouldn't hurt you, Lord love you! And if you've run away from him, I won't tell, I promise you."

"Won't you *really*?" asked Peg, with a look of cunning anxiety, but forgetting that her very question was letting out her secret.

"No, I won't, upon honor," said Peck. "Here, little man, let's see if we can't get a cake," he continued, addressing Master Bobby, whose friendship was marketable on such terms, and who at once conceived a high regard for Mr. Peck.

So Peg suffered Mr. Peck to accompany her, and even volunteered her story of her escape from Weazel's house, and the accident that brought her to the town where they then were. In return for this confidence, Mr. Peck, as simple-hearted as any child himself, told her of his own promotion on the railway from porter to guard, which accounted for his being in that place, and habited in that uniform.

"I'm afraid Mr. Weazel pretty nigh starved you, Peg, didn't he?" he asked, kindly.

"That he did, drat him!" cried Peg, energetically. "He'll come to a bad end, *he* will."

Peck smiled at the child's energy.

"Do you know that he's a much richer man now than he was?" said Peck. "Did you ever hear of Mr. Littlegood?"

"No," answered Peg, "I never heerd of no one but you."

"Well, all about it is that Mr. Littlegood had a lot of money, and Weazel has contrived to get it all away from him for a man named Bennoch; and Bennoch let Weazel have a good share of it for his trouble."

Mr. Peck made himself so agreeable, that Peg never remarked that she was close to home, till they were actually before Mr. Crank's door. When she informed Peck that this was her home, he suggested that he would come inside with her, and just pay his respects to her master and mistress, for he kindly thought it might do the girl some good if her employers saw that she was not altogether friendless. So he *did* step in, and Mrs. Crank became very friendly, and Mr. Crank thought that Mr. Peck "would do" very well indeed; and finding that he did not leave the town till next morning, they insisted that he should come and take some tea with them in the evening.

Peck accepted the invitation, and during the evening became

quite confidential with his entertainers, Mr. Crank talking very little, but his wife fully making up for his taciturnity, by discussing everything from politics to babies. Certainly, she was more *au fait* at the latter subject than the former, and gave Mr. Peck a great many valuable hints as to the rearing of infants, which, however, would doubtless have been rejected with scorn by Mrs. Peck, who had six children, while Mrs. Crank had only two; and the degree of compassionate contempt which a lady with half-a-dozen children treats the opinions of another who has a less number is well known.

At length the conversation turned on Peg Todd.

"She's not a bad girl, but she certainly is one of the queerest I ever met with," remarked Mrs. Crank.

"Oh, she'll do," observed her husband.

Mrs. Crank smiled, and went on :

"She's behaved quite well, though it was rather venturesome of us to take her without a character. I can't help thinking that she's run away from somewhere; but I daresay she was ill-treated, for she ain't a bad girl, as I said, though she certainly can't boil a potato."

"She *was* badly treated—half-starved a'most," said Peck.
"That Weazel was the stingiest fellow ever I saw."

"Weazel!" said Mrs. Crank, catching at the name. "That was her master's name, was it?"

Peck saw that he had let out more than he meant.

"I was only thinking what a very strange name it is; I never heard of such a name before."

"I don't know as ever *I* did," replied Peck.

"*I* did," said Mr. Crank, to the surprise of his wife; for he seldom made a remark unless actually appealed to.

"Where, Tom?" asked his wife.

"Here," answered Crank.

"Well, I can't say *I* know anybody of the name in this place," said his wife.

"He don't belong here," replied Crank, "he came from London on business."

"Oh, parish business, I suppose?"

"Yes; he wanted to see a certificate of a marriage that he'd got a copy of."

Peck listened attentively.

"Do you happen to remember the name of the parties?" he asked.

"Yes; Bennoch was one."

"That's it," said Peck; "did he find it?"

"No, that's why I recollect him so well. It was very odd, but the leaf where the original certificate was entered was torn out."

"What do you think about that?" asked Peck.

"Nothing; I told him the copy would do," answered Crank.

"Do you think there could be any roguery in it all?"

"I don't know."

"If there was I wouldn't mind betting half a year's salary that Weazel was at the bottom of it—he's a big rogue, I do believe. That copy of the certificate robbed a noble gentleman of his property, and gave it to a drunken rascal—who's dead now, though, so I ought not to call him names. And Weazel himself got a slice. There's roguery, you may rely on it."

"I daresay," answered Mr. Crank, not much moved by what did not concern him. "That Weazel—"

"Oh!" cried Peg, entering the room at the moment, and hearing the name.

"Don't be afraid, Peg," cried Mr. Peck. "Your good master and mistress won't think the worse of you for running away from that fellow."

And the Cranks joined their assurances to his, and Mr. Peck bid them good evening and promised to call on another of his journeys, and he went away with his good heart and his thick head full of kind feelings and indistinct ideas of something wrong touching Weazel's visit to the town, and with a determination not to let the matter rest as it was.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LORIMER SEEKS A SITUATION.

WHEN Lorimer Littlegood made up his mind to get a living by the sweat of his brow, he had little idea of the difficulties he was destined to encounter. Of all helpless beings in this civilized world of ours, there is none so completely helpless as the well-educated, gentleman-like young man without a profession. He cannot dig and he is ashamed to beg. But even if he could dig, it would not much help him, and although begging used to be rather a profitable species of calling, mendicity societies and policemen have considerably spoiled the trade of late. Besides which, you require a sick wife and seven children, a cadaverous visage and a scarecrow figure, to prosper as a genteel beggar, and Lorimer possessed none of these natural advantages, nor had he learned the art of manufacturing them for the occasion. Certainly he had plenty of friends—men who had eaten his dinners, drank his wines, ridden his horses, borrowed his money and forgotten to repay it—excellent fellows all, who were troubled with near-sightedness when Lorimer next appeared in town without the dinners, the horses, or the money. If by accident they *did* see him, it would have done the philanthropist good to hear the warmth with which they expressed their sympathy for his misfortunes. And even behind his back they all declared that he was a capital fellow,—they were deucedly sorry,—it was a confounded shame,—such a good-natured chap as he was, too,—and so forth. But somehow or other, not one of them ever came forward and offered Lorimer the slightest assistance; not one of them ever

volunteered his time, his interest, his experience, and far less his money, to aid him in obtaining what they all knew he required, the means of existence. And yet we are not quite correct in saying this, for one man positively offered to lend him money if he required it; but added, that at that particular moment he really had not a sovereign he could command. Another said that Lorimer might command any interest which *he* had; but it turned out that he had none on earth; while a third said that his time was at Lorimer's service, excepting, that he was engaged every day from ten till four in duties that he could not neglect, and started off every afternoon at the latter hour for his villa at Richmond.

So that, really, it was a mere unfortunate connexion of circumstances that prevented these benevolent friends from aiding Lorimer, and no one could impute want of feeling to men who so fairly came forward to offer—what they had not got.

Bidding adieu at length (but not till after many a heartache of disappointment) to visions of "appointments," obtained through friendly and influential interest, Lorimer began to look steadily to the fact that he could rely on no human being but himself; and himself he found a very fragile reed to lean upon. He tried all the usual resources of answering advertisements and advertising himself till he was weary of them.

Walking one day about town in that vague and purposeless manner which is natural to men hoping for "something to turn up," his eye lighted on a couple of wire-gauze window blinds, on which were inscribed, "Clerical, scholastic, medical, professional, and general agency office."

"Comprehensive enough!" thought Lorimer. "'Clerical, scholastic, medical, professional and general.' I should have thought the last word would have done without the rest, but certainly it would not have looked or sounded so imposing. I wonder what the agency consists of—what sort of business they transact. It is just possible they might serve my purpose; at all events, I'll try."

Saying or thinking which, Lorimer walked into the open doorway, turned the handle of a door on which was inscribed "office," and beheld a small boy seated on the top of a very tall stool before an extremely red-looking mahogany desk. The small boy, who had evidently been doing nothing at all, grasped a pen as Lorimer entered the door and plunged it into the ink ; but was slightly puzzled to know what next to do, as there was not a particle of paper on the desk before him.

"Ahem !" said Lorimer, to make the little imp look round.

"What do you please to want ?" asked the latter.

"Is the manager of this office in ?" inquired Lorimer.

"No, he ain't," answered the boy.

"When do you expect him ?" asked Lorimer.

"I don't expect him, 'cos I never see him," replied the imp.

"What do you mean ! Whose office is this ?" said Lorimer.

"Mr. Muggins's."

"Is *he* in then ?"

"Yes ; he's allers in," was the reply.

"Tell him that I should like to see him, then," said Lorimer.

"What's your name, please ?"

"Mr. Littlegood."

"Walker !" cried the small boy, grinning.

"What do you mean, you little rascal ?" cried Lorimer.

"None of your chaff," said the little one, looking very knowing. "That ain't *your* name, Mr. Little——, oh, my !" and the imp began to laugh as if he had discovered a capital joke.

Lorimer leant forward and caught him by the ear, at which the little wretch made a wry face and seemed disposed to yell.

"If you don't go and tell your master I want to see him, I'll pull your ear off, that's all," said Lorimer.

"I'll go," answered the boy ; and happy to have his ear released, he rushed to a small back room, from whence he immediately returned, saying, "Come in, please."

Lorimer entered the room, and at a small writing-table beheld a tall, hatchet-faced, cadaverous, half-clerical looking man, dressed in solemn black, who made a polite bow to him.

"I beg your pardon for intruding on you," said Lorimer, "without being at all certain whether you can be of any service to me; but I see that yours is an agency office——"

"Clerical, scholastic, medical, professional, and general," said the grave man.

"Exactly so," said Lorimer; "and, as I am in want of employment, I thought I might ask you whether procuring it forms any part of your agency?"

"Preliminary fee, five shillings," said the grave man.

"I beg your pardon," answered Lorimer, and he produced the required sum, which the grave man quietly slipped into his pocket, and said,—

"May I ask to *which* profession you belong?"

"To none, I am sorry to say," answered Lorimer.

The grave man's hatchet face remained quite impassive.

"What is the nature of the employment you wish to obtain?" asked he.

"Upon my word I can hardly tell you, nor do I much care what it is," was Lorimer's answer, "so long as I can live by it."

"Can you write?" asked Mr. Muggins.

"I am a graduate of Oxford," answered Lorimer, smiling and amused.

"I asked if you *can* write," observed the grave man, waiting for a reply.

"Oh, I see; you mean *can* I write—as an author, I suppose?" asked Lorimer.

"I mean simply what I say—*can* you write? I am not talking about authorship at all."

"When I told you I was a graduate of Oxford, I should have thought you need not have repeated the question," replied Lorimer, not at all annoyed, but rather surprised, at the "character" before him.

"Not at all," returned Mr. Muggins, "graduates of Oxford are plentiful enough, but the proportion of those who *can* write (at least a hand that anybody can read) is very small."

Lorimer smiled.

"You must be good enough, if you please," said Mr. Muggins, "to retire home, and forward me a written application for employment, stating the nature of it as well as you are able."

"And do you think you will have any chance of procuring it for me?" asked Lorimer.

"I am a clerical, scholastic, medical, professional, and general agent, and not a dealer in chance," said Mr. Muggins, gravely.

"Upon my word, I did not mean to offend you," returned Lorimer. "I merely wished to know whether I might hope for a situation of some kind or other."

"You have paid me the preliminary fee," replied Mr. Muggins. "You will have employment within a fortnight, and you will thereupon have to give me an undertaking to pay me half of your first month's salary."

"I shall be very happy to do so," answered Lorimer.

"No, you won't; you think you'll be very happy to do it now, but when you get into the situation you will speak of me as a humbug and a nuisance; but still you *will* pay me, because I shall make it legally binding, and because I think you look honest. Good day, sir," and he bowed Lorimer out.

"Well!" thought Lorimer, "of all the queer sticks I ever met, that is one of the oddest. However, he speaks very positively of getting me employment, and therefore decidedly I'll write him a letter."

When he reached the economical apartments he had taken, in lieu of the St. James's-place ones, he sat down and wrote as follows:—

"Sir,—I am, as I informed you this morning, a graduate of the University of Oxford, and was possessed of an independent property, of which the result of a lawsuit has deprived me. I am now, therefore, in urgent want of some employment where-

in my education and attainments may be of service, and by which I may earn a moderate subsistence. If you can assist me in this, I shall be truly obliged to you, and most happy to make you any recompense in my power.

"I am, &c."

When Mr. Muggins received this letter he said—

"Ah, not a bad hand; a gentleman, quite unbusinesslike—couldn't keep books—I know exactly what will suit him. The professor's the man for *him*."

And then Mr. Muggins folded and ticketed the letter, and put it in the unanswered drawer of his writing-table.

He let it remain there purposely for ten days, at the expiration of which time Lorimer received a formal note requesting his attendance next day at eleven o'clock, at the "Clerical, scholastic, medical, professional, and general agency office."

Mr. Muggins received him in the same impassive manner as before.

"Do you know anything of conjuring?" asked that gentleman in the gravest manner.

"I really do not," said Lorimer, laughing at the strangeness of the question.

"You don't entertain any particular repugnance to the art, I presume?" asked Mr. Muggins.

"Really, I have never troubled my head about it," answered Lorimer.

"Ah! exactly so," responded Mr. Muggins. "Well, I am going to give you an introduction to Professor Dabskin, the celebrated conjuror, who is in want of a secretary."

"A secretary!" exclaimed Lorimer, puzzled to know what a conjuror could want with such an animal.

"Yes, you wonder for what purpose, I presume?"

"Indeed, I do," was Lorimer's answer.

"Well, you see," said Mr. Muggins, with his usual gravity, "the professor receives about thirty or forty letters every day,

and ~~not~~ being able to read them, far less to answer them, he naturally requires assistance for that purpose."

"I suppose you mean that he has no time to read them himself," suggested Lorimer.

"No I don't," answered Mr. Muggins, "I always mean what I say. I mean that the professor *can't* read them because he cannot write or read written characters; but he's a very clever fellow, for all that."

"How very odd!" exclaimed Lorimer, "I should have thought it would have been worth his while to learn."

"Not at all," replied Muggins; "few things pay so badly as reading and writing. Singing and standing on your head, dancing on the tight-rope, putting your head into a tame lion's mouth, juggling and telling lies—all these things are much more profitable in our enlightened times than reading and writing; and we should not be such fools as to study the latter at all if, as in the case of the professor, our parents (though *he* never had any, I believe) had omitted to have us instructed in them in our days of childhood. But here is the professor's address; when you have seen him, if terms are arranged between you, call here and settle with *me*. Good day, sir;" and again he bowed Lorimer out.

The latter found himself almost at the professor's door before he began to think of the strangeness of his errand. Secretary to a mountebank! bah, what's in a name? a professor! why not a professor? If all the professors who deserved the name of mountebank were so called, what a clearance would there be in learned halls and ancient colleges, and how much conservative veneration would be lost to an admiring world!

CHAPTER XXIV.

PROFESSOR DABSKIN.

REACHING the house to which his letter of introduction was directed, Lorimer knocked at the door, and was admitted by a page in the lightest and brightest of blue liveries, and with the largest eruption of silver buttons ever before beheld on a single boy. Indeed, it seemed as if he had been pelted with buttons, which had all stuck to him.

“ Is Professor Dabskin at home ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; what name, sir ? ”

“ Take him this letter—stay, though—he can’t read it,’ thought Lorimer ; “ why the deuce did Muggins give me a letter of introduction to a man who can’t read ? Say, Mr. Littlegood,” he continued, to the page.

“ Yes, sir ; this way, sir,” and conducting him up stairs, he ushered him into a small boudoir, where a man was lying on a sofa smoking a meerschaum.

“ Mr. Littlegood ! ” cried the page.

The professor, who was habited in a gorgeous, parti-colored, silk dressing-gown, rose from the sofa, and made a profound bow.

“ I brought this letter from Mr. Muggins,” said Lorimer, producing it.

“ Will you have the goodness to read it out to me while I continue smoking ? ” said the professor.

“ With pleasure,” answered Lorimer, repressing a smile ; and he read the letter, which merely introduced and recommended himself as a fit person to be secretary to the professor.

"Did Mr. Muggins tell you the sort of thing I want?" asked the professor.

"Not exactly," replied Lorimer; "but I believe you wish some one to manage your correspondence, as your own time is too much occupied with other matters—is it not so?"

"Well, it's very polite of you to say so, but we may as well understand one another downright. Are you agreeable to be my secretary at a hundred pounds a year, besides board and lodging?"

"Really," said Lorimer, "you're very kind. I shall be most happy—that is, if I understand what I am to do."

"Of course you *don't* understand; but I'm going to tell you all about it. Only look here; if you won't agree when you've been told what it is, of course it's all *mum*, eh?" and the professor laid his finger on his lip.

"Certainly," said Lorimer.

"Secrets in every trade, you know, and you mustn't split if I let you into some of mine."

"I shall always act consistently with honor, I hope," said Lorimer.

"I haven't much opinion of honor," answered the professor. "Honesty's plain enough; it means no picking and stealing, or lying and slandering; but honor is a fanciful sort of thing, and means anything, from blowing out your friend's brains to hiding his *rogue*ry."

"The professor's an original," thought Lorimer.

"You may smile, but that's my opinion," said the professor, "and I'm a plain man. Still I don't see why all the secrets of my art should be made known by my secretary, and that's why I say it'll be all *mum* if we don't agree."

"Certainly."

"Well, then, first of all I want a man that can write well, to answer my letters; then I want him to know outlandish tongues, so as to give out-and-out names to new tricks of mine; then I want him to be able to knock off a little poetry

for puffs and advertisements ; then I should like him to be able to draw a bit, so as to give a picture now and then ; then I want him to be shot at, and to be mesmerized, and to be a medium, and everything else—do you understand ?”

“ I think I do,” answered Lorimer.

“ Are you agreeable to join me then ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Very well then ; come to-morrow, and next day we’ll be off.”

“ Are you going out of town,” asked Lorimer.

“ To be sure. I never stay long at one place. As soon as you’ve made a great hit, and astonished everybody, move on, or else you’ll have some fellows coming and watching every night, and finding out your tricks.”

“ Does that ever happen ?” asked Lorimer.

“ Often enough,” answered the professor ; “ why, there’s my celebrated trick that used to be, where I changed the lady’s handkerchief into the Guinea pigs, every common fellow has got hold of it now, through a chap watching me, and dodging me all over the country till he found out the secret.”

“ Very provoking, certainly.”

“ You may say that, robbing you of your invention, the efforts of your genius. Perhaps you don’t think there’s much genius wanted to be a magician ; but you’re mistaken. I’m not a learned man ; to tell the plain truth, I can hardly write at all, but I mean to say that I’ve as good a head as any of those that have been educated into lawyers and doctors. They’re all *taught* ; now you can’t teach a man to be a wizard, he must have a natural genius for it, and that’s just what I flatter myself *I have*.”

Lorimer bowed acquiescence in what he could not possibly dispute.

“ There’s no knowing,” continued the professor, “ how you may turn out yourself. You may have a natural talent for it yourself, and if so, there’s no reason why you shouldn’t culti-

vate it ; but if you think, as soon as you've found out one or two of my tricks, that you're a made wizard, you'll find your self mistaken, that's all."

Lorimer now prepared to depart.

"By-the-bye, Mr. Little——"

"Littlegood."

"Mr. Littlegood, do you happen to know all the foreign orders of knighthood, the names of them, I mean?"

"Not all," answered Lorimer ; "but some of them, I can remember."

"Well, just try and be well up in them, because I'm going to belong to several of them!"

"How so?" asked Lorimer.

"Why, you see, the Emperor of Austria conferred the Order of the Black Donkey on me when I astounded himself and all his Court at Potsdam ; and the King of Siam made me a Knight of the Golden Fleece when I exhibited before him in Nova Scotia, and so on, don't you see? Only it's as well to have the names correct, and I suppose I'm a little bit out in those I just hit on, ain't I?"

"Rather," said Lorimer, laughing.

"Ah, well, have 'em all right when you come to-morrow, and we won't make any mistakes. Come to dinner if you can, at six, and we'll talk things over."

When Lorimer left the house, he began to consider the step he was going to take—secretary to this professor, who was apparently as great a humbug as could well be. But, after all, there was some fascination in the fun of the thing ; he should "see life" in a new phase, and if he got disgusted with it, he could but throw it up. Meantime, a hundred a year was not to be lightly rejected.

Before finally joining the professor, he determined to pay a farewell visit to his mother and sister ; so he took a ticket for his native village at once.

It was school-time when he arrived, and Jessie was busy in

her new duties. She had collected about a dozen pupils, and might be said to have made a most prosperous start. As a great favor, Lorimer was admitted to the school-room ; but he was told that he must not stay there above a minute, as the mammas of the elder girls would no doubt consider it highly reprehensible that their daughters should be exposed to the fascinations of a penniless, good-looking, moustachioed, young gentleman.

So Lorimer had to be alone for some time with his mother, till the hour arrived for Jessie to dismiss her pupils for the day.

" Well, Jessie, dear, and how do you like teaching ?" asked Lorimer.

" Very much," she answered, " because I believe I can do it pretty well, and I feel it will support us."

" Then I suppose for the same reasons I ought to like *my* new situation," said her brother.

" Yours ? have you indeed got one ? I am delighted ; what is it, my dear boy ?"

" Secretary to a professor."

" Delightful ! what is he a professor of ? Chemistry ? astronomy ? languages ?" she asked.

" Now, my dear Jessie," said Lorimer, " do you think that a professor of chemistry, astronomy, languages, or anything that was really needful and intellectual could afford to keep a secretary ?"

" But what then *do* you mean ?" she exclaimed.

" My professor," answered Lorimer, " is a professor of magic, a wizard, a mesmerizer, a great man, too, on whom I am going to confer half the orders of knighthood in Europe."

" You are joking ; what can you really mean ?"

" Exactly what I say. I am engaged at a salary of a hundred a year, and board and lodging, as factotum to a mountebank."

" Oh ! you will not really go to him ?" said Jessie.

"Indeed, I shall. I always liked seeing life, you know," he said, with a smile at his sister, "and now I really think I shall see a new, and rather comic, phase of it."

"But is it respectable?"

"Not a bit of it, as far from respectability as it can be, and that's the greatest charm about it. If the professor were in the least degree a respectable man, I couldn't go to him; but I'm certain he's the greatest humbug on the face of the earth. I don't suppose he ever had a father and mother; he can't write, and can scarcely read, and he can tell more lies in five minutes than you or I could invent in a year. Oh, no, he's not in the remotest degree respectable, and so I like him."

"Will you not suffer in character yourself by being associated with him?"

"Not at all. I've my own plans, and I mean to carry them out. I am quite determined to go to the professor, so don't try to persuade me otherwise."

Jessie half smiled and half sighed, but she said no more.

Next day there was a loving farewell between mother and sister and brother, and Lorimer hastened back to London to join the professor at dinner.

Mr. Dabskin was expecting him, and greeted him cordially.

CHAPTER XXV.

PROFESSOR DABSKIN'S PHILOSOPHY.

MR. DABSKIN, professor of legerdemain in all its branches, was a perfect Sybarite in his style of living. Money flowed so plentifully into his coffers, that he had long ago lost the habit of reckoning the cost of anything that took his fancy, from a waistcoat to an equipage. Especially did he like to live well, and was always attended by his own French cook, lest the *cuisine* of the hotels he frequented, in his tours through the country should be ill-supplied—as in the truth they usually are. Professor Dabskin would as soon have thought of dining on one of the plum-puddings made by himself in the hat borrowed from the accommodating gentlemen in the pit, as on the inevitable chops and tomato sauce, or underdone steak and oyster ditto, of every country inn. Time had been, it was whispered, when the professor would have been delighted to get the worst cooked chop in the kingdom for his dinner, with no other sauce than the voracious appetite of a half-starved youth; when he would linger near the savoury odors of a cook's shop, aggravating the hunger he had not the means of satisfying. But those days had long since passed away, and the professor had forgotten them—even as Alderman Truffles, at a Lord Mayor's feast, forgets the hour when, as errand boy at three shillings a-week, he invested the carefully saved penny in the luxury of a Saturday-night polony. Pain and poverty are soon forgotten in pleasure and profusion.

And, now that we are on the subject of cookery, let us ask a simple question —how comes it that we English are so far

behind, not only our French neighbors (allies, is the right word just now, we believe), but almost all the other civilized nations of the world? A dozen answers will be given in a moment, but they will all be unsatisfactory. Some people will tell us that our meats and our vegetables are so good, that they do not need the adventitious aids of a clever cook; but he who has vainly endeavored scores of times "to digest, with many a throe (as Pelham hath it), the tough sinews of a British beef-steak," will know that the excuse is absurd. We might as well say that because our coal mines and iron ores are superlative, we need not trouble ourselves to manufacture the finest cutlery by their means. Others will declare that we prefer English cookery because it is more wholesome—as if indigestion and other unnameable inconveniences, arising from our savage *cuisine*, were conducive to health. Others, again, will boldly declare that English cookery is better, more agreeable, more appetizing, than French. It would be as hopeless to reason with this last class, as to attempt to persuade a cannibal that human flesh is not nicer than beef, or to convince an Abyssinian that raw steaks, cut from a living ox, are, gastronomically, a decided mistake. Taking the fact for granted, that we *are* bad cooks, shall we lay the fault on our want of taste or our want of invention? It is a little galling to our national vanity to own it, but we fear we must admit that it arises partly from both defects. Our taste in trifles (we call cookery a trifle by way of salve to the vanity aforesaid), is not at all equal to that of our allies, and our invention is vastly inferior to theirs. Novelty of any kind, unless borrowed from over the water, is the rarest thing in sensible, solid, stolid old England. Even when we see, hear, or taste a novelty, it takes us a long time to make up our minds whether we like it or not. It would be worn out in Paris before we had quite determined in London whether we approved of it. And so we stick to huge sirloins, and awfully real-looking legs of mutton, with a few thick, black, heavy "made-dishes," from gen-

eration to generation, and know not the endless variety of delicious *entrées* and delicate *entremets*, which are “household words” in *la belle France*.

Professor Dabskin, like a sensible man, preferred French cookery to English, and fed on dishes whose flavor he thoroughly appreciated, though he knew not their names any more than their contents.

“There’s the bill of fare,” said he, pushing the *carte* over to Lorimer, “if you know the meanings of the names, as I dare say you do. *I don’t*; but I know most of the dishes by sight, and if I come across a new one, my nose generally tells me whether I shall like it, before a morsel of it has passed my lips. My cook generally hits my palate pretty well.”

“That’s not extraordinary,” said Lorimer, “if everything he makes is as good as this *potage à la Bisque*.”

“Are you a judge?” asked the professor.

“I fancy so,” replied Lorimer.

“That’s right. I hate a man who can’t appreciate good cooking. When a fellow tells me he can dine as well on a chop as on anything else, I always think him a fool—besides considering that he’s robbing and insulting me. What the deuce does he come and dine with *me* for?”

“I suppose you have been a great deal on the Continent?” asked Lorimer.

“Never crossed the English Channel,” answered Dabskin.

“But the foreign orders of knighthood?” said Lorimer, interrogatively.

“Ha! ha! very good—you’re fond of a joke I see;” said the professor. “Will you try another glass of Madeira? No? quite right: more than one glass is a mistake; and that should only be taken immediately after soup—the finest wine in the world *then*, but worth nothing at any other time, except perhaps with a little *paté* for lunch.”

“This hock is really excellent,” said Lorimer.

“Yes—very good—the real ‘blue seal.’ Prince What’s-his-name, that it all belongs to—”

"Metternich," suggested Lorimer.

"Yes, that's the man—he sent me over a lot of it when his master, the Sultan of Borneo——"

Lorimer burst out laughing.

"Ha! ha!" cried the professor, joining in the laugh; "I forgot who I was talking to. However, the wine is as good as any old what's-his-name *could* have sent me, and stands me in about a guinea a bottle."

"I've no doubt of it," answered Lorimer, "for I've paid as much for a less good vintage myself."

"You!—oh—ah—yes—I forgot. I think I heard you spent a lot of money. Great mistake, by-the-bye, to spend it when you havn't got plenty. Besides which, any fool can *spend* money; but it's not so easy to *make* it. And yet, you much oftener hear men boast of the former."

"You are a shrewd observer of human nature," said Lorimer, "I should imagine?"

"How the deuce could I have got on in the world if I had not been?" responded the professor. "My dear sir, it is not learning, or cleverness, or anything of that kind that makes your successful men; it's knowledge of the world—knowledge of the world's stupidity, and how to take advantage of it. What does the man in the play say? something about the world being an oyster. So it is—just as hard, and rough, and stupid too, as the outside of an oyster; but it isn't every one that knows how to open it, and get at the delicate morsels it contains. If you push away ever so hard in the wrong place, you can't manage it, though you may cut your own fingers; and if you bring too sharp a knife to the work, you'll only blunt the edge and get no good; but if you go to work with an instrument that's not easily damaged, look about keenly, till you see the right place—then slip it in—the least twist and there you are. You've opened your oyster—made your fortune—and it's very pleasant when you *have* done it."

Whatever might be the moral character of the professor, it

was perfectly clear to Lorimer that he was no fool. Indeed, Lorimer was half inclined to think that he was, probably, a little *too* clever—that is to say, that his wit was rather too large in proportion to his moral sentiments. Not an uncommon fault this, though by no means so general as the world supposes. He that lives by his wits has as bad a name as any dog ; and, therefore, society is quite ready to gibbet him when it gets a chance. Perhaps, after all, he is far more to be pitied than condemned ; but, then, pity is a god-like quality, and there is nothing god-like about society. Respectability, that is to say, jogging along old beaten tracks, paying your debts, and doing nothing that can be suspected of talent, greatness, or out-of-the-way goodness—this respectability is all that society cares for. If you infringe it, you are tabooed : you are either condemned as unfit for association, if you don't keep up to its eternal low water mark, or you are avoided as a dangerous innovator if you rise above it. In the estimation of society—we speak of nineteen-twentieths of people of the world—there are three orders : the respectables, the adventurers, the rogues. The two last are supposed to be so nearly allied, that it is difficult to make a proper distinction between them : so society gives up the task, and shuts them both out of her circle.

Whether Professor Dabskin, who was a perfect Pariah in the eyes of society, deserved its condemnation will, doubtless, appear to the intelligent reader as we progress. Don't let it be supposed that we have been writing a defence, or apology, for him. Our remarks are general, and only suggested by the professor's position. In truth, there is nothing so difficult for a story-writer to avoid, as a tendency to jump aside from the current of the tale, and enter into quiet little discussions touching morals and manners. We have good authority for so 'doing in Smollett and Fielding, who usually devoted a long chapter at the commencement of each volume or "book" of their stories, to a pleasant digression. We have no Fieldings and Smollets in these latter days, though we have one novelist who

surpasses either (may he soon return from Cousin Jonathan to instruct and delight us again !) yet we are all moralists, or we are nothing. We don't all write "with a purpose"—that hackneyed phrase adopted by the dull to cover the paucity of their invention—but if we paint life as it is, surely our pen-and-ink pictures point a moral without the necessity of its being constantly thrust under the reader's nose, or of our proclaiming it by sound of trumpet. Indeed we always regard authors, who cry out "behold—this is my moral!" as in the position of those primitive painters who wrote, "this is a horse" and "this is a man" under their figures, well aware that there was a chance of nobody finding out what the figures were intended to represent, unless specially informed of the fact.

In the course of the evening, Lorimer asked the professor where he proposed giving his entertainment next. Dabskin replied that he was off to Stumpington to-morrow afternoon, and would, of course, require Lorimer to accompany him.

"Are there any peculiar instructions that I ought to be acquainted with before starting?" suggested Lorimer.

"No—none in particular," answered Dabskin. "All you have to attend to, is to do exactly what I tell you."

"But how can you tell me in the presence of an audience?"

"Very well. I can whisper, if there be any necessity; or I can say it outright."

"But won't that spoil the trick?"

"Not a bit of it: suppose, for instance, I mesmerize you. You sit down in a chair—I tell you the position in which to place yourself—then I make a few passes; then I say, "Ladies and gentlemen, the patient is now completely under my influence; he can hear and understand what I say, but he cannot move or speak, except as I will him"—and so on. Don't you see that you are getting your instructions while I am talking to the audience only?"

"Cannot you really mesmerize, then?"

"Of course not;" said the professor, coolly. "But I can pretend, which is just as good."

"Perhaps you don't believe in mesmerism at all, then?" asked Lorimer.

"Of course I don't. The professors of a mystery never believe in it themselves. I know perfectly well that if I get a weak, nervous female opposite me, and tell her that she is to look straight at me while I stare might and main at her, and keep moving my hand in a waving, monotonous manner, she'll drop off into a sort of sleep. I don't know *why*, but so it is; but you don't suppose that anybody could mesmerize *me*, do you? The truth is, that those who are mesmerized go with a determination to be so; if you don't wish to be sent to sleep there's no man in the world can send you, if he makes passes at you till his own arms drop off."

"Do you believe in spirit-rapping?" inquired Lorimer.

"I don't believe in anything," answered Dabskin, "but what I can see."

"A very limited creed," said Lorimer, smiling.

"Not at all. There's plenty of the real to believe in without troubling our heads about the fanciful. Thank goodness, I'm no poet."

Lorimer burst out laughing.

"I don't see the joke myself," said the professor; "but I know this, if I had been a poet I should not have been able to give you that dinner that we've settled, to say nothing of Prince What's-his-name's hock."

"Very true; but possibly poets have higher tastes to gratify."

"So much the better for them; for they won't gratify the lower ones out of poetry, I fancy. And yet I can't say I ever met what's called a highly intellectual man, who hadn't got a tremendous appetite. That's another of my practical observations of life as it is. Perhaps you can account for the fact?"

"I don't think I can," answered Lorimer, smiling.

"Well, I've always thought the reason to be that your

intellectual men don't earn the best of dinners in the world every day, and when they come across a good one, they naturally try to do it justice."

"It's fortunate for you," said Lorimer, "that all men are not as incredulous as yourself, or where would be your audiences?"

"Exactly so; but fools always will be in the majority, and wise men always will take advantage of their folly. Good night!"

And so they parted for the night.

"I'm afraid the professor's a great rogue," thought Lorimer to himself. "The fellow seems to have no conscience at all: and yet he has a philosophy of his own. That makes it so much the worse; your philosophical rogues are rogues upon principle. There's no chance of their ever repenting or reforming because they not only practice villainy but defend it, and swear that it's as good as honesty. Ought I to throw up my engagement at once? I believe I *ought*, but hang me if I *can*. I do want to see this bit of life, and I will."

And with this attempt at self-consolation for an act he did not really approve of in his conscience, our hero (who won't be heroic, it seems, under any circumstances) turned on his side and slept soundly through the night.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE MATTER OF RICHARD BENNOCH, A MINOR.

THE death of Bill Bennoch was a great source of disappointment to our friend Mr. Weazel. That worthy little gentleman, it is true, had induced Bill, before his death, to raise money on his property wherewith to reward his, Mr. Weazel's, zeal and activity in procuring him the estate; but then Mr. Weazel expected many more advantages yet to flow in from his intercourse with the Bennochs. Indeed, he contemplated no less than getting the whole estate himself by degrees. He knew that a man of Bennoch's drunken and improvident habits would always be in want of more money than he had at command, whatever his income might be. To supply these wants and to get acre by acre from Bennoch in return was his object. This was defeated by Bill's death.

Bennoch died without a will. The property being principally freehold landed estate, passed, therefore, to his only son and heir-at-law, Dick, a young gentleman who gave early proofs of his intention to follow in the course of his departed parent.

"Dick must have guardians," said Weazel to Mrs. Bennoch.

"Ain't I his guardian?" she replied, snappishly, for she hated Weazel as much as ever.

"Certainly not," answered the little man.

"We shall soon see about that," rejoined Mrs. Bennoch. "Let anybody try to interfere between me and my children, and see what he'll get. I don't suppose *you* forget soap-suds, do you?"

Weazel was slightly disconcerted at this remark and allusion; he was, also, somewhat alarmed at Mrs. Bennoch's energy. At the same time he was not going to yield without a struggle.

"My dear madam," he said, in a soothing tone, "I quite sympathize with your feelings on this point—they are those of a worthy mother; but, unfortunately, the Lord Chancellor is a person not easy to be resisted."

"What's the Lord Chancellor to do with me or my children?" asked the widow.

"Everything, my dear Mrs. Bennoch, everything," said Weazel. "Your poor husband having died intestate, the Court of Chancery will make your son its ward during his infancy."

"He's no infant; he's fifteen," said Mrs. Bennoch.

"Infancy, in the meaning of the law, is under twenty-one," said Weazel. "The Lord Chancellor will make Dick a ward of Chancery, and will appoint a guardian or guardians over him."

"Then he'll appoint *me* the guardian," she answered, doggedly.

"No doubt he'll name you *one* of them, my dear madam," said Weazel. "But it will be necessary to have a gentleman also—"

"Then it won't be *you*; so don't think so," she answered, "for you're not a gentleman, and you're no friend of mine. I won't have it, I tell you, though I see it's what you're driving at now."

Weazel was again disconcerted. How he muttered curses in his heart against this "she-devil!" It is true he thought he might succeed in being appointed guardian in spite of her opposition; for was it not he who had procured a restitution of the property? was he not the most intimate personal friend of the late Mr. Bennoch? was not the mother an illiterate woman, and, as such, perfectly unfit to have the sole guardian-

ship of a youth who was to be brought up as a gentleman and the proprietor of a good estate?

At the same time he saw clearly that he had better conciliate her if possible.

"I wish, I'm sure," said Weazel, "that I could remove your prejudice against me—"

"You'll never do that," she replied.

"But why not?" he asked.

"Because you'll never be honest; because you're a scheming, cheating, lying, underhanded little wretch: I've told you so before —do you suppose I shall ever think different, eh?"

Weazel ground his teeth with rage, and cast a look of ferocious hate at her.

"Ha! ha!" she laughed; I "should be frightened at that look if you weren't a coward. Clever as you are, you can't hide your character, you see."

Weazel made a strong effort to smother his passion, and succeeded better than almost any other man could have done.

"It's natural that I should feel anger," he said, "when such hard names are given to me; but I forgive you, I'm sure, and I hope some day you'll do me justice. Let us talk reasonably. I tell you that the Lord Chancellor will certainly appoint one male guardian for your son; and as he will naturally seek to know who may be considered the best friend of your family—"

"I'll tell him," she exclaimed, interrupting him—"I'll tell him myself: Mr. Littlegood."

"Mr. Littlegood! what, the very man who kept you all out of your rightful property!"

"It's false!" she screamed; "it's false, Weazel, and *you know it!*"

Weazel was actually alarmed; for the moment he dreaded some revelation, some discovery, but no, no; it was only her suspicion, and what is suspicion without the shadow of a proof.

"I can see your hang-dog look. Listen, Weazel!" she ex-

claimed, laying her hand on his arm, and grasping it so tightly as she went on speaking that he could scarcely repress a cry of pain. "I know that there is some villany at the bottom of all this. I don't know what it is, but God does, and He'll tell us some day. We're not the rightful owners of this property, but Mr. Littlegood is. Don't speak—don't deny it; do you think I'd believe your lying lips when God tells me the truth in my own heart? I tell you that Mr. Littlegood has been my best friend; he spent his money and his time and his care on little Rose, and we've rewarded him by ruining him. *He shall be* my boy's guardian; and I hope the Lord Chancellor will let him spend half the money for his own self."

Weazel grinned—a ghastly grin, half of pain from his pinched arm, and half of amusement at Mrs. Bennoch's original method of making compensation. He had one consolation—he was quite sure that Lorimer Littlegood would not accept the office, and that even if he would, the Lord Chancellor would be about as likely to bestow it on him as on the king of Ashantee.

The subject of this discussion, or rather the young gentleman whose interest and fortunes gave rise to it, was at present a boarder in the establishment of the Reverend Doctor Crammer at Highgate.

Dr. Crammer prided himself on a great many things, if we may use the word "pride" in connexion with a doctor in divinity. In the first place he was proud of his conscientiousness. He thanked God that he did not starve his scholars as other schoolmasters did, nor make them bring silver spoons with them which they did not want, and forget to return them when they went home. He prided himself on admitting only gentlemen's sons into his establishment, and bringing them up *as* gentlemen. He boasted that he made every boy really learn that which he professed to teach, and did not merely set them tasks and leave it to chance whether they performed it or not. Finally, he took great credit to himself for using no rod or cane in his school, but supplying the deficiency by moral punishments.

It was strictly true (or almost so) that the doctor could take credit to himself for all these things. He gave his boys plenty to eat; but that was only fair when he charged eighty guineas for their board. He did not commit the customary plate robberies of many other schools. He drummed all the knowledge he could into a boy's head; but, alas! this was done at many a sacrifice, for he made the poor fellows stick to their work at least ten hours a-day, and he taught them nothing but what was taught in the Dark Ages. As for using no rod or cane, many a poor lad wished that he did, instead of having nine-tenths of his play-hours taken up in the "moral punishment" of writing the same line over for a thousand times, or occasionally getting a "punch on the head" from the doctor's fist, or a slate, or a thick book. To tell the truth, the doctor had a bad digestion, and was irritable and ill-tempered to a frightful extent. He was a very Presbyterian of schoolmasters, and considered, or at least treated, every one of his pupils as if they were predestined to eternal punishment.

Certainly, he was aristocratic in his views, and would never take a tradesman's son into his school. Mr. Bennoch, being a man of landed estate, was, in his opinion, unquestionably a gentleman, and so Dick was admitted without hesitation.

Dick felt far from comfortable in his new clothes; they seemed so tight and looked so clean that he was afraid to move in them. And then, though Dick was by no means of a modest disposition, he was rather abashed on finding that while he could barely read, the other boys of the same age were deep in Virgil, and Homer, and mathematics—people and things of whose existence he was till then unaware. In fact, Dick had to go to the bottom of the lowest class, amongst the smallest boys, who beat him well in school, while he consoled himself by beating them in turn out of it.

Dr. Crammer being about as completely destitute of genius himself as any human creature, utterly ignored its existence in others. Woe to the unlucky boy to whom Heaven had given

it, if he came under the control of Dr. Crammer! The doctor having acquired all his own learning by dint of methodical drilling and hard labor, believed in nothing else. If you had told him that the thorough-bred racer would kick and fret itself to death if put between the shafts of a wagon or a dung cart, the doctor would consider you a person of wild and dangerous notions. If you tried to persuade him that some young minds catch at great truths almost by inspiration, while others may be drilled and crammed to eternity without imbibing them, the doctor would think you still more mad. He looked upon every boy as a machine, which, by careful training, could be made to perform such and such work. The possibility of the machine breaking down under the training never entered his head; still less could he conceive that some of the machines were ready-fitted for a much higher class of work than his own brain ever conceived.

If the minds of children were all like sheets of perfectly blank paper on which the teacher may write what characters and what learning he pleases, Dr. Crammer might have been a tolerably good schoolmaster. But as we have all differently constituted minds and characters, even from our very birth,—as it requires much sound sense, observation, judgment, patience, and kindness to watch the development of each youthful intellect, Dr. Crammer was one of the very worst of tutors; for his mind was contracted and his temper was detestable.

Never were young gentlemen more orderly than at Dr. Crammer's. A loud shout in the playground would have been punished by a thousand lines. A laugh in schooltime would have been a still more mortal offence. A torn jacket would not have been forgiven for a month; and all other juvenile peccadilloes were treated in the same grave and serious manner till the spirit of every boy in the school was thoroughly cowed, and his young heart thoroughly wretched.

Before Dick had been two days in the place he had received six severe moral lessons, consisting of an address delivered to

the whole school during meal time (by way of helping digestion, perhaps,) on Dick's delinquencies.

"I'm afraid this boy is in a bad state of mind," observed the doctor, looking grave.

Dick hadn't a notion of what he meant; so he only put his tongue in his cheek, and made a face at the boy opposite.

The doctor caught the look, and Dick caught—a box on the ear that nearly upset him.

"You leave me alone, will yer?" cried Dick; "hit one of your own size, can't yer."

The doctor was petrified for a moment, and the scholars trembled in their small-clothes. Suddenly the doctor rushed upon Dick, apparently with the intention of utterly annihilating him: but that young gentleman had so often been used to "dodge" a policeman's blows that he was a little bit too active for the doctor; and diving between his legs, he sent the reverend gentleman sprawling in the most undignified way in the world, while a peal of laughter (the pent-up laughter of many a dreary half-year) burst simultaneously from every scholar.

The doctor rose—rose foaming with indignation and pain—every voice was hushed in a moment, and every little heart terrified. The doctor was on the point of again springing on Dick, but the latter had reached the fire-place, and actually stood brandishing the poker.

"You come a-nigh me, and see if I don't crack your blessed old nob!" shouted Dick.

Not one of those young gentlemen present, whatever age he might attain—would ever again experience such a profound astonishment at any event on earth as each one felt at that moment;

"To beard the lion in his den,
The Douglas in his hall,"

would have appeared trifling compared with Dick's daring at this moment. As for the doctor he was so utterly staggered

that he actually turned faint, and would, probably, have fallen, had not some of the elder boys come to his assistance, and given him a chair.

"Give him a drop of this," said Dick, "and tell him I won't hurt him if he won't hurt me."

A drop of this! What was it? The words revived the doctor as a horrid fear crossed his mind. Dick held out a small flat bottle, and its contents were—gin!

It is a wonder that the doctor did not go off in a fit of apoplexy, brought on by the combination of indignation, horror, and his upset on the floor. Gin! Gin brought into the establishment of the Reverend Dr. Crammer by one of his own pupils.

Master Richard Bennoch slept at home that night, and Dr. Crammer's medical attendant was called in to the reverend gentleman, whom he found in a kind of nervous fever.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LORIMER'S FIRST APPEARANCE ON ANY STAGE.

THE railway conveyed Professor Dabskin and his new secretary to Stumpington on the afternoon of the day following that which we have described.

Stumpington is not, perhaps, one of the most important places in the kingdom, though so considered by its own inhabitants. It is not very extensive, nor is it much distinguished for anything in particular. It is, indeed, one of those country towns that puzzle busy men of the world to know what they were built for, who inhabit them, and what they do to pass away the time. If you walked down its High Street you would be still more puzzled about the last point, for you seldom met more than one or two people in it, except a lazy ostler outside the inn that nobody ever went to, or a wagon-driver plodding heavily along beside his sleepy team. Yet there must have been something to do, because there was a fair number of shops, and there was a bank, with its name in great gold letters on its wire-blinds, and there was a market-place and a theatre. Yes, positively there was a theatre; but then it was seldom open. Occasionally a few third-rate actors "on circuit" called there, and gave a couple of nights, when the house smelt very fusty, and the scenes (everybody knew them as well as the furniture of their own rooms) would not shift well, and the gas bobbed up and down unpleasantly as if the pipes were damp, as they no doubt were, and the curtain had holes in it badly darned up. Still, with all these drawbacks, Stumpington was

always considered by the Thespians on circuit a fair paying place for a couple of nights.

At this moment the walls of the market-house and every other available blank wall in and about the place, together with the shop-windows, had tremendous "posters" announcing the fact that the great wizard and necromancer, mesmerist and enchanter, Professor Dabskin, was going to give his unrivalled entertainment, which he had had the honor of presenting before all the crowned, and most of the uncrowned, heads of Europe and the world, that night, and that night only, in the Theatre Royal aforesaid.

The "posters" were not thrown away; never before were so many boxes and seats taken beforehand as on this occasion in Stumpington. It was hinted that the lord-lieutenant and lady-lieutenant of the county, and all the little lieutenants (that is to say, their fair and interesting family) would be present. It was proclaimed that Colonel Bumpus and the officers of the 19th Heavy Dragoons, quartered at the nearest garrison town, would all come over; and the announcement made every young lady in the town most earnestly anxious to see--the professor. The mayor's name appeared in the bills as special patron of the entertainment, and, in short, everything was done to make the event come off well, and Stumpington resolved to have a night of it.

When the professor and Lorimer drove into the town from the railway station—which, like all country railway stations, was, of course, a long way from any human habitation, except that of the station-master—when they drove into the town in an open post-chaise they were vociferously cheered by a multitude of people, who wondered which was the professor and who the other could be, and admired the bright blue livery and eruption of buttons on the professor's page seated in the dickey; and wondered still more who the grave looking gentleman seated by the side of the page could be, and had not the slightest notion that it could be the professor's French cook.

As soon as they were safe in their hotel, the proprietor of the theatre called.

"Well, Mr. Brown, how go matters?" asked Dabskin.

"Capitally, professor; capitally. Never knew so many places taken beforehand in my life."

"You've never had *me* here before," said the professor.

"Ha! ha! Very good; just so."

"My secretary, Mr. Littlegood; Mr. Brown, Mr. Littlegood," continued the professor, introducing them.

"Sir, to you; you do me proud," said Mr. Brown.

"What time do we begin?" asked Lorimer.

"Seven, sir; seven. An early place this. Many of the nobility have a long way to come and to return at night."

"It's four now," said the professor. "Plenty of time to get the things ready. Buttons will take care of that; he always manages that matter. And I dare say my cook will let us have a good dinner by half-past five."

Mr. Brown departed, promising to see to everything connected with *his* department, namely, the theatre itself, and left the professor and Lorimer alone.

As the hour of seven approached, the latter began to feel a little nervous. He did not like the idea of assisting at such a juggling affair at all. However, it was too late to draw back now; and so Lorimer determined to have some fun to himself and after his own fashion.

"Now, understand, I expect you to do exactly what I tell you," said the professor, who seemed to Lorimer to have adopted rather a more important and commanding tone since they left London. "If you *don't* we shall quarrel, and I'm not a man to be trifled with."

Lorimer started in surprise; but the professor was sipping his soup, and seemed quite unaware that he was adopting an offensive tone.

"I'll serve you out," thought Lorimer, "for your impertinence;" and he kept his word.

At seven o'clock the Stumpington theatre was "crowded with an overflowing audience," as newspapers always phrase it. The lord-lieutenant had really come and brought his lady and his little ones. The officers of the heavy dragoon regiment had also actually come, and the Stumpington young ladies were in raptures and ringlets, each striving to outdo the other in smiles, good humor, and good looks. The Stumpington young men were there also—less pleased, because they did not at all admire the heavies aforesaid, and thought their moustachios quite absurd. It is true that one or two individuals had tried to get up a moustache movement in Stumpington, but it broke down, and the directors of the bank especially forbade their clerks to cultivate such an ornament under pain of instant dismissal—being, in fact, particular to a hair, and connecting forgery and embezzlement with hirsute countenances.

There was a band, and the band played an overture to something nobody knew what, though whether this arose from the limited musical knowledge of Stumpington, or from the limited powers of execution of the band, we cannot decide. And then the curtain drew up, and Buttons was discovered standing beside a velvet-covered table.

Then the professor entered and made his bow, and then all Stumpington clapped its hands and hurrahed, and then the professor put *his* hand on his heart and bowed again and again; and then, by degrees, the noise subsided, and the professor said:—

"Ladies and gentlemen—"

But we are not going to give the professor's speech—it was completely to the point; which was that he, the professor, was the greatest man in the world. Nobody attempted to dispute this fact, and the professor talked with such eloquence about his foreign orders (for which he had been cramming poor Lorimer on his way from town) that all Stumpington believed him to have more decorations than the late Duke of Wellington.

After the preliminary speech the professor performed a great

number of the tricks which every mountebank does perform, and which one may see as well done in the street as in the professor's entertainment. No matter; everybody applauded everything, and all went merry as a marriage bell.

"Now then, I want you," said the professor to Lorimer, in an under tone. "Now mind what you're about, and don't make any confounded mistake."

Here the professor made another little speech to the audience touching the wonders of mesmerism. He deprecated the unbelief of some people in this most wonderful discovery of modern times, and protested that he would afford them the most convincing proofs of its extraordinary effects.

He then made Lorimer sit on a chair in the middle of the stage, facing the audience.

"Now observe, ladies and gentlemen," he said, and he began making passes at Lorimer. "He is gradually becoming comatose."

Lorimer laughed an audible laugh; the audience laughed too.

"Confound you!" whispered the professor. "Be still, or I'll serve you out. You see, ladies and gentlemen, that being far from a weak or nervous young man, this gentleman takes some time to be completely affected. Observe that he is gradually becoming perfectly still."

And so he did. By degrees, Lorimer's hands dropped down, his eyes became fixed and remained perfectly listless and apparently in a waking sleep.

"At this moment, ladies and gentlemen, the patient is entirely under my control. He cannot move, or speak, or think but as I please. I will give you proofs of this. Do you hear me?" addressing the patient.

"Yes."

"You can't lift your arm—try."

The arm did not move.

"Try to move your right leg." The leg did not move.

"Now observe, ladies and gentlemen," and the professor took Lorimer's arm and lifted it straight up. "Where I put it, it will remain;" and it did remain bolt upright.

The audience applauded vociferously.

"Now observe me put it down again," and he took hold of the arm, but it did not come down. Let it down you fool, will you?" whispered the professor in a rage.

Lorimer sprung up from his seat, caught the astounded professor by the collar, and led him before the no less astounded audience.

"Now confess to these ladies and gentlemen," cried Lorimer, scarcely able to repress his own laughter. "Confess what a miserable trickster you are. Confess you don't know anything at all about mesmerism, and that you only want to impose upon them before their faces, get their money, and laugh at them behind their backs. Confess, sir."

Shouts of laughter greeted the professor, who cowered under the grasp, the glance, and the voice of his secretary. Shaking him well, Lorimer gave him a thrust and sent him spinning off the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Lorimer, "if I have spoilt your amusement I sincerely beg your forgiveness. So long as the man performed his own tricks I did not interfere, but when he wished to make me a party to a gross deceit I judged it right to expose him."

There were a few cheers, but a very few; and then followed loud groans. At first Lorimer thought these were for the professor, but shouts of "Off! off!" convinced him that *he* was the object of their anger.

He was surprised! How little he knew the world! Was any man ever grateful to another for showing him that he had been made a fool of?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FALCON HOVERS OVER A DOVE.

Poor Mrs. Bennoch was not an enviable woman. She used to think it extremely disagreeable to want money for bread in the days when she took in washing, and her husband drank her earnings. It seemed to her, at such times, that if she had enough to live on, and no tipsy brute to trouble her, she should be a perfectly happy woman: and yet, now that she enjoyed both these coveted advantages, she was as far from happiness as ever. Certainly she did experience a relief in being rid of Bill, and it was far from unpleasant to be assured of plenty of food and clothing; but these blessings were counterbalanced by many new evils. She was uncomfortable in her new position: she was expected to be a "lady," and she felt she was not one, and had no desire to be one. A little pension, and no position, would have suited her better than the wealth and station the Bennoch family had attained. And the good woman had another secret grief: she wished her son and daughter to be educated as befitting their new fortunes, but she had sense enough to perceive that this would gradually remove most of the sympathy existing between her and her children.

"They'll look down on their poor, ignorant mother," she used to say to herself; "they'll despise me—oh, no! no! I won't believe that ever my dear little Rose will despise her own mother. She's too good for that, but still she won't understand me, and I shan't understand her. Oh dear! I wish we had less money, only just *enough*."

Her interview with Weazel, touching the guardianship of Master Dick, had greatly discomposed her. She hated and dreaded that man more than ever: not fearing him personally, but loathing his influence over anything, or any one belonging to her. It was quite clear that she had not much time to lose, for Weazel would be sure to be on the alert to gain his ends. To whom to apply for advice and assistance, she knew not. As to what the Court of Chancery was, she had scarcely an idea, but associated it in her mind with something dangerous and horrible, as a great many people do who are intimately acquainted with it. The only lawyer she knew was Weazel's lawyer, who had managed all the affairs of her late husband, and she had sense enough to guess that *he* was not the man to apply to in such a case as the present, where her wishes were diametrically opposed to Weazel's. At last a thought struck her.

"Rose, dear, where does Mr. Littlegood live?" she asked her daughter.

"Mr. Littlegood!" exclaimed Rose, as her heart beat at the sound of the name; "why, mother?"

"I want to know, darling; I will tell you *why* another time. Rose told her mother the address which Lorimer had given her when he begged her always to apply to him for aid or advice. And Rose sighed, and wept too, when she thought of the kind, good, handsome friend she had lost. To say truth, Rose never could think of Lorimer without recalling his good looks. I don't know how this happened, but such is the fact. Rose was very young yet, and the young are most captivated by beauty. This may be the only explanation; time will show.

Mrs. Bennoch put on a very formidable widow's bonnet, and left the house, called a cab, and drove to Lorimer's late lodgings.

"Lor' bless you, ma'am," said the servant girl who opened the door, "he's gone away ever so long: he lost all his money, you know, and couldn't afford to live here."

Mrs. Bennoch sighed. "Who had robbed him of his money?" she thought.

"Can't you tell me where he's gone?"

"That I'm sure I can't; but now I think of it, I can tell you where the lad lives that used to be his servant, and he, mayhap, can tell you more than I can."

The girl then gave Mrs. Bennoch the address of Job Peck; that is to say, his brother's house, and to that place Mrs. Bennoch forthwith proceeded.

Mrs. Peck, the active, busy, cheerful, little Mrs. Peck, whom we have not met for so long a time that we fear the reader may have forgotten her, was rocking a baby with her foot, sewing with her hands some garment of another child, and telling with her mouth a grave, moral story for the edification and delight of a third child. Mr. Pickwick made acquaintance with a cab horse which he was informed would tumble down and die if he were ever taken out of the shafts, and so he never was allowed any rest at all. Now, we verily believe that Mrs. Peck would have moped herself to death in a week if she had been positively forbidden to do any kind of work for that space of time. Activity was life itself to her, and her cheerfulness was equal to her activity.

When Mrs. Bennoch entered the room, and saw the little family group of Pecks, she was conscious of a feeling something like envy of the happy mother. Indeed, she thought to herself that she should like her condition to be precisely what she judged from appearances Mrs. Peck's must be, one of competence without riches, comfort without "gentility." There was a strong contrast in the appearance of the two women as they stood facing one another, for Mrs. Peck rose and curtsied as soon as Mrs. Bennoch entered her room. The one was small, feminine, good-tempered, and free from care in her appearance; the other tall, masculine, hard-featured, and with the lines of many an anxious hour indelibly stamped upon her face. They were of about the same age in reality, but at first

glance you would have taken the widow to be ten or fifteen years the senior. So she was in one sense, for none of our lives are truly "dated by years;" the wear and tear of heart and brain, to say nothing of the body, constitute age. He that hath known grief and poverty and strife is old at a time of life which men call young. What is youth, but freshness and purity, and health of mind and body? What is age, but the absence of all these?

"My name is Bennoch," said the widow; "I beg your pardon for disturbing you."

"Oh, don't mention it, pray," said Mrs. Peck, startled at the name, and not best pleased with it; but after all, she thought, the poor woman is a widow!

"I wanted to see Job Peck, who used to live with Mr. Littlegood," continued Mrs. Bennoch. "Do you think he can tell me where I can find his master—I mean, Mr. Littlegood?"

"I am sure I don't think he can," said Mrs. Peck; "but he ain't here, he is in service with another gentleman."

"Might I go and see him?" asked Mrs. Bennoch.

"Oh, yes, certainly—that is—I beg your pardon, ma'am, but he's very fond of Mr. Littlegood, and I hope you don't want—I mean—"

"I think I can guess *what* you mean," said Mrs. Bennoch, not unkindly, though rather grimly, as her manner was; "you hope I don't want Mr. Littlegood, to do him any harm! Indeed, I don't: he's been my best friend, and God knows, I wish he had his money back again, it's *not me* that would keep him from it. Come, is that what you meant?"

Little Mrs. Peck stammered and blushed slightly, but confessed that she did hope no harm was meant against Mr. Littlegood. She then gave the widow Job's address, and Mrs. Bennoch left her.

"Poor thing! *she* ain't happy, one can see easy enough," soliloquized Mrs. Peck. "Ah! it ain't riches that's happiness. I should like to know if I'd lose my dear, good husband for

millions of riches. No, *that* I wouldn't, would I, you little rogue?" and she kissed her baby as the tears stood in her eyes at the bare thought she had conjured up.

Meantime Mrs. Bennoch found Job, but Job could give her no information. He knew nothing of what had become of Lorimer, he wished he did, for he was a good man and a good master, and he hoped he'd thrive, and if he didn't thrive, there wasn't nobody in the world deserved to—that's all *he* had to say.

Mrs. Bennoch was pleased to listen to Lorimer's praises, though sorry to gain no information about where he was to be found. She stood musing for a time, and then said:—

"You don't happen to know a good lawyer, do you, Job?"

"I should think I ought, my new master's one," answered Job.

"Indeed! is he a good one?" asked Mrs. Bennoch.

"Do you mean a clever, sharp one?" asked Job.

"Yes."

"Oh, then he's an out-and-outer," replied Job, readily, and much relieved, for he was afraid that he should be requested to speak as to his master's *moral* goodness, and on that point Job entertained opinions which he did not care to divulge.

"Do you think he'd manage some business for me?" asked the widow.

"He'd do anything for money—I mean—of course, you know it'd be his duty to do it" answered Job, who was nearly saying a little more than he intended. "Shall I go and speak to him?"

"Thank you," said Mrs. Bennoch; "and I wish you'd just tell him about me, because you know, don't you?"

"All right, I wish I didn't."

"So do I, God knows," and Job was sorry for having said what he did.

In a few minutes Job returned to Mrs. Bennoch, whom he had left in the hall, and begged her to walk up-stairs to his master's room, to which he forthwith conducted her.

Mr. Falcon, the gentleman into whose presence Mrs. Bennoch was ushered, was a man of about thirty-five years of age, with an eye like that of the bird whose name he bore, and a nose not unlike the same bird's beak. Not that Mr. Falcon was a bad looking fellow, quite the contrary ; the ladies, who surely are the best authorities on such a point, considered him extremely handsome. Piercing dark eyes, aquiline nose, jet black curling hair, pale skin, well cut mouth—such a face as this, added to a graceful figure, was attractive enough. Certainly his forehead, though white, was hardly full enough ; the eyes, though good in color, form, and brightness, were not capable of expressing the gentler feelings ; and the mouth, handsome as it was, seemed apt to curl with an expression that was not so much contemptuous or supercilious, as *cruel*. Altogether, a physiognomist would have hesitated to accept the friendship or to incur the enmity of Mr. Falcon.

“Pray be seated, madam,” the attorney said, handing her a chair in a well-bred and easy manner, and treating her with that perfect respect, untainted with the slightest touch of servility, which is unattainable by the vulgar.

“I dare say Job, sir, has told you who I am,” said Mrs. Bennoch, more awed than she had ever felt before.

Mr. Falcon bowed acquiescence.

Mrs. Bennoch then proceeded to tell her story as well as she could. Mr. Falcon made little hasty notes as she went on, and helped her narrative so wonderfully every now and then, by filling up little gaps which she left in the history, that she more than once paused and said—

“But, perhaps, you know all about it, sir ?”

“Not at all, not at all,” was the reply.

Nor did he ; for he had heard nothing of the case till that moment. But a lawyer is so accustomed to deal with similar matters ; so accustomed to hear clients tell long rigmarole stories, in which they lay great emphasis on parts that are utterly immaterial, and glide over, and forget, those on which

the whole matter legally turns, that he sees, almost intuitively, into a case directly the first rough outline of it is set before him.

"This Weazel, I take it, is a clever little fellow in his way?" he asked.

"He's the wickedest villain living, I do believe, sir," answered the widow.

"Oh! dear, oh! dear," said the attorney, smiling, and showing some very white teeth, "you must not say that, my dear madam; or he'll be bringing an action against you for slander. Besides, you know, he helped your late husband to this estate."

"I wish he hadn't, it's done us no good, I'm sure; and it's ruined a good gentleman."

"Mr. Littlegood, eh?"

"Yes, sir: and what I want now is, that Mr. Littlegood may be made my son's guardian, if he'll be so kind as to be it."

"He, my dear madam?—it's impossible, the chancellor would think us mad in asking such a thing."

"That's because the chancellor don't know Mr. Littlegood, then," replied Mrs. Bennoch.

It cost Mr. Falcon a great deal of trouble to convince Mrs. Bennoch that it was utterly useless to think of this favorite scheme of hers; but she was obliged to give way at last, when he assured her that no attorney in the world would assist her in presenting such a petition.

"Well, anyhow, sir, I *won't* have that wicked little Weazel to be the guardian," she at last exclaimed.

"Oh that's a different matter," answered Mr. Falcon, soothingly. "There's no need why you should have him if you object."

"Will you promise me he *shan't* be?" she asked.

"I think I may venture to do that, because the chancellor would certainly not like to appoint a guardian against your wishes: but we must have some one to suggest in his stead. Who shall it be?" he said.

Mrs. Bennoch had not the slightest notion in the world : for few people had so limited an acquaintance as she, and even the individuals she did know were not such as she would wish, or the chancellor approve of, as guardians of her hopeful son. At length, after some hesitation, she said—

“Would you mind being one, sir?”

Mr. Falcon professed to be really quite taken by surprise ; short acquaintance—serious responsibility—and so forth, but ended by consenting to waive his objections, if he had any.

And so the widow went away a little more at ease in her mind.

And Mr. Falcon, as he drove his cabriolet in the park that afternoon, with Job perched up behind, thought it would be a good and profitable office to be guardian to the heir to three thousand a year.

And two days later Mr. Falcon called on Mrs. Bennoch, and he saw, beside the widow, her daughter, Rose. And Rose was looking so beautiful and young, and innocent, that Mr. Falcon was more than ever satisfied with his new clients ; and his dark eyes flashed and his mouth curled with its worst and most cruel expression, as he left the house, still thinking of Rose.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LORIMER MEETS WITH NEW FRIENDS AND AN OLD ONE.

WHEN Lorimer Littlegood returned to the Stumpington Hotel, after spoiling the professor's mesmeric exhibition, he was not the happiest man in the universe. Anger is, certainly one of the most unpleasant sensations in the world, but when the anger you feel is with yourself, it is ten times less endurable than ever. If you are angry with any one else, you have the consolation of thinking you will kick him, or rail at him, or punish him in some way, or perchance magnanimously forgive him. With yourself you can do nothing but repent ; and repentance, though highly commendable, is dreadfully dull and slow work.

Lorimer's case stood thus. If he was right in exposing the professor's trickery, he was clearly wrong and culpable in accepting the engagement, as his secretary. If he was right in accepting the engagement, then he was wrong, and almost treacherous, in exposing the secrets of the professor's trade. Which-ever way he turned his own condemnation stared him in the face. This made him angry—it should have made him simply penitent, no doubt ; but alas ! there are some natures that gall and fret themselves when they should be humble. Happy the man who finding his error can regret it with humility, and atone for it with amendment ! Lorimer was, we fear, one of those whose first error is fated to lead to many others by unsettling the mind, and making it wage hopeless war against the consequences of its own misdeeds.

In addition to the consciousness of having acted improperly, there came also the reflection that he had thrown away his

“bread and butter.” Let us do him the justice to say that this did not weigh nearly so heavily with him as the other consideration ; but still it was not to be overlooked. His purse was extremely light—his means of replenishing it, at present, none. He was some distance from London, and his hotel bill and railway fare would still further diminish his slender resources.

He was sitting in his bed-room and thinking over these matters, when he heard a knock at his door.

“Come in !”

It was Buttons, the page, who entered.

“Oh, my, he-he-he !” began the boy, holding his sides and bursting with laughter, “I never see such a go in all my life—he-he-he !” And Lorimer thought the boy would go into a fit.

“What the deuce are you laughing at, eh, you young rascal ?” he cried.

“Oh, my ! I can’t never keep from thinking of your collar-ing old Dabskin. I’ve been bustin’ ever since, and he’s punch-ed my head twenty times off the scenes for it this blessed evening.”

“But did the performance go on ?” asked Lorimer.

“Go on, I believe yer,” replied the boy ; “the people cried ‘Dabskin,’ and Dabskin comes on, and makes a low bow, and the people cheers him as loud as they can, and hoorays like mad ; and Dabskin keeps makin’ more bows, and puttin’ his hand on his weskit, and then he says, ‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ and the people cries, ‘Hush !’ and ‘Order !’ and then he goes on, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, I trust you will not condemn *me* for the ruffianly conduct of the shameless young man whom I had the misfortune to employ as my secretary,’ and the people cheers again, and Dabskin goes on, ‘That young man was ur-gently requested by me not to feign the mesmeric sleep, but to wait till it came upon him properly. He basely disregarded my request, and tried to make it appear that *his* imposition was *mine*. I am worthily repaid for my endeavors to reclaim

him from a career of vice and extravagance, in which he has wasted a noble fortune. It is impossible for *me* to keep so hopeless and abandoned a profligate in my employment, but I shudder to think what will be the wretched fate of this Mr. Lorimer Littlegood.' "

"Do you mean to say the rascal said all that?" cried Lorimer.

"In course he did," answered the boy, grinning, "and the people cheered him like mad, and he pulled out his pocket-handkerchief and put it to his eyes, and made believe he was blubbering. Oh, my! how I did bust with laughin'!"

"This is pleasant, upon my soul," said Lorimer.

"Ain't it fun?" cried the boy, who only saw the amusement of the thing. "I thought you'd like to hear; besides, master sent me to tell you, you are to go to the devil, and pay your own expenses."

Lorimer smiled; and yet he felt very much disposed to go and collar the professor again. But a little reflection told him that he had to thank himself for what had occurred. So he merely sent his compliments to the professor, that he should pay his own expenses, but had no present intention of going to the devil.

He then went to bed, and slept soundly till morning. Some people can always do this, whatever may be the amount of troubles on their shoulders. So it was with Lorimer; grief neither spoilt his rest nor his appetite yet.

In the morning he was surprised to find, brought to his room with the shaving water, a note, addressed to himself. He broke the seal and read as follows:—

SIR,—I was at the theatre last night and witnessed your conduct. I am not about to tell you whether I approved or condemned it; but I merely beg that you will not leave Stumpington without first affording me an interview. I am pretty

well known here. Send me a line to say when I may expect a call from you ; and believe me to be

“Your obedient servant,
“JOHN RUNDLE.”

“Who can the writer be ? What can he want ?” thought Lorimer. “I must inquire when I go down stairs.” So he dressed and descended to the coffee-room to breakfast.

“Waiter, do you know a Mr. Rundle ?”

“Rundle, sir,—lawyer, sir ?”

“I am sure I don’t know what he is,” replied Lorimer, “but his name is Mr. John Rundle.”

“That’s him, sir ; he’s a lawyer, sir ; everybody knows him, sir.”

“Is he a respectable man ?” inquired Lorimer.

“Oh, certainly, sir,—very, sir,—keeps a pair of carriage-horses, besides a cab, for riding, sir.”

“Yes, no doubt ; but what sort of a character does he bear, I mean ?”

“Well, sir,” said the waiter, “considering that he’s a lawyer, sir, I should say a capital good one.”

“Very well, thank you,” said Lorimer, and he went on with his breakfast.

It then struck Mr. Littlegood that this lawyer must have been employed by the professor to take proceedings against him for what he had done last night. He was half inclined not to go ; but would it be well to run away from the consequences of his own act ? No.

So finishing his breakfast, and inquiring his way to Mr. Rundle’s house, which, like all country solicitors’ abodes, was a great red brick building, with a very bright brass knocker, he was soon in the presence of that gentleman.

“I suppose you wonder what I want you for ?” asked Mr. Rundle, a bluff, honest-looking man.

“I dare say I can guess !” replied Lorimer.

"Can you? What is it?"

"I presume you are employed by Mr. Dabskin to sue me," was the answer.

"I employed by a mountebank, ha! ha! very good! No, Mr. Littlegood, I don't have such clients as that; though, by-the-bye, you were quite wrong last night."

"Indeed, sir," answered Lorimer, nettled.

"Yes, quite wrong," continued the other, coolly, "and you know it, and are sorry for it, so we won't talk about that any more."

"You seem to think you know a great deal about me, sir," said Lorimer, angrily.

"Not a great deal, but a little more than you imagine," replied Mr. Rundle.

"That is to say, I presume, you choose to believe the lies that man uttered against me after I left the theatre?"

"Quite the contrary," said the other, still perfectly unmoved, "I knew them to *be* lies; I knew that you did not spend your fortune, (though, by-the-bye, you were trying to do so,) but that you were robbed of it."

Lorimer looked at the lawyer in surprise.

"It is quite clear, sir, that you do know something of my history, though you are mistaken in saying that I was *robbed* of what appears never to have been rightly mine."

"Appears, yes; still I don't alter my phrase, and I shan't tell you how I know what I do. The question is, will you trust yourself to my guidance for a time?"

"In what way?" asked Lorimer.

"Will you do exactly as I tell you?" said the lawyer.

"Really, I hardly know what to reply."

"You had better reply 'yes,'" answered Mr. Rundle. "Well, since you are such a very cautious young gentleman," he continued, smiling, "I must tell you what it is I want you to do. I want you to let me see if I cannot get back your property for you."

"But, my dear sir," answered Lorimer, "it has been proved *not* to have been mine."

"Tut, tut," began the lawyer.

"And besides," continued Lorimer, "I have no money to pay the expenses of litigation."

"Of course you have not; I know all that. Now, my good young gentleman, I want to serve you, if I can. You believe that the estate is *not* yours. You may be right; but as I know a little of one of the parties connected with this business,—I'll tell you how another time,—my strong impression is, that you have been cheated somehow or another. At all events I want you to let me sift the matter; it will be at my own expense, if I'm wrong; but I dare say, if I get you an estate, you won't mind paying my bill of costs."

Lorimer smiled and said—

"Really, sir, I ought to feel, and do feel, most grateful to you for your kindness, especially as I am a perfect stranger to you, and certainly you did not see me under very favorable circumstances last night as secretary to a mountebank."

"No," said Rundle, smiling, "but I have had a good character of you from another quarter. By-the-bye, will you allow me to introduce you to my family at once, and to engage you to dinner, because I must give you my views on your affairs more fully this evening."

And the old gentleman rose and led Lorimer, in a state of half-bewilderment, into the drawing-room, where two or three ladies were sitting at work.

"My dear, Mr. Littlegood; my wife, Mr. Littlegood, and my daughter, Jane, and—but you don't need an introduction here, I dare say," said the old gentleman, presenting Lorimer to a second young lady.

Lorimer looked up—

"Miss Stanley!"

"Quite right," said Mr. Rundle, "that's the young lady's name; and now, perhaps, you can guess where I had your shocking bad character?"

Miss Stanley colored, and looked confused ; Lorimer was almost as much embarrassed.

"I'm afraid I don't deserve a very good one from Miss Stanley," said Lorimer.

"Then, by Jove, you get more than your deserts," exclaimed old Rundle, with a chuckle.

"Papa," remonstrated Miss Jane.

"That's not fair at all, my dear," added Mrs. Rundle.

"Well, I'm sure I meant no harm," said old Rundle, who seemed to think, that instead of being wrong, he had done quite right in letting Lorimer know what opinion Miss Stanley had formed of his character.

Meantime Miss Stanley had resumed her seat on the sofa, and Lorimer had taken the chair nearest to her, and they were already conversing earnestly together. Let us seize the opportunity to introduce the lady to our readers.

Yet what a task have we undertaken ! Can we perform it ? We have a great mind to leave it alone, and begin a new chapter ; but as Miss Stanley will, perhaps, figure a little in these memoirs of our scapegrace acquaintance, something must be said about her personal appearance.

Was she dark or fair ? Neither ; that is to say, her hair was a rather dark chestnut, and her skin very fair ; her eyes brown, the lashes black. The eyebrows were a little too straight, if the perfect arch be the criterion of perfection. And yet we never knew a good brain, and an arched eyebrow go together. The mouth was small : at first glance you would have said the lips were too thin, but you soon lost sight of this defect, if it existed, in observing the ever-varying expression of which those lips were capable. And then they enclosed such faultless teeth, that you could not have wished them thicker lest they should hide somewhat of the beauty of these ivories.

Was she tall or short ? Neither : she would not have been a fitting model for a Juno, but she was not a "pocket Venus," as dumpy little young ladies are occasionally called. She was

of a moderate height, with an easy and graceful figure, and rather slender than otherwise. And so we have sketched the picture. Every one of our readers would, no doubt, be able to improve it, but then we are not describing a Venus, but Miss Stanley, as she was, and as we knew her. One thing is certain: Lorimer Littlegood was astonished to find how handsome she was: he had never noticed before how expressive her mouth was, how fine her eyes, how intellectual her forehead. Perhaps he had formerly been too much occupied with his own appearance to notice hers: such is very often the case with good-looking young gentlemen.

We are not going to give an account of Lorimer's conversation with Miss Stanley. It was the first time they had met since the unlucky affair of Lavers's lying letter, and his consequent cudgelling by Captain Kelly. He had not much trouble in convincing her of his innocence in this matter. She assured him that her mother entertained the highest opinion of him.

"And her daughter, not a bad one, I trust," said Lorimer, "if I may believe Mr. Rundle."

"Oh, he's fond of joking and quizzing every one," she answered, but coloring again.

Lorimer took his departure after a short visit, until dinner time, when he joined the little family party.

After the ladies had retired, Mr. Rundle recommenced his conversation on Lorimer's affairs. The first thing to be done was to get hold of all the papers relating to the affair.

"But Mr. Bosher has them all, and I am sure I don't know what has become of him," said Lorimer.

"I do," observed Mr. Rundle.

"Indeed!"

"Yes: he's at Boulogne, and you must go over there to him. You will have to coax, and bribe, and threaten, perhaps; but I think you'll be able to get the papers from him. Will you go?"

"Certainly," replied Lorimer.

"Very well; then, as we cannot begin operations, or even

know what they will be, until we have got the papers, we won't talk anything more about the affair at present."

A very pleasant evening did Mr. Lorimer Littlegood spend with his new friends. And when he went to bed that night, he did *not* fall asleep as quickly as usual, but he lay thinking of many things and many people; and yet he thought a great deal more about one person than about all the rest of the persons and things together; and his bosom heaved an unwonted sigh; and he dreamt many dreams, and the *one* person figured in each of them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MRS. BENNOCH ASTONISHES THE COURT OF CHANCERY.

ABOUT seven or eight hundred are yearly added to the list of English attorneys. Whether a country can be strictly considered to be in a healthy condition as to morals, which requires this frightful number of individuals to carry on its litigation, is a question we leave others to determine. At least we may regard it as a sad sign of the times. Numbers of men go to the bar for the mere honorary degree, and without any intention of seeking for practice; no man becomes an attorney but for the purpose of gaining his livelihood in the profession. Indeed the “honor” of being an attorney, is one that most men would gladly dispense with. In society his position is as anomalous as a well educated tradesman’s; he may be received on account of his own personal merits, but certainly not for his calling. His object then is gain; and the gain is to be made from litigation. No doubt a chorus of attorneys will cry “no” to this, and talk of “conveyancing,” and “general business,” and so forth; and perhaps even point us to firms that never issue a writ from one year’s end to the other, and yet have a most lucrative business. But this does not destroy our argument. We know something of conveyancing, and can safely declare, that if the law of real property were simplified to the extent, that every lawyer of common sense is aware that it *may* be simplified, no man could make a living by conveyancing. Indeed everybody could draw a conveyance, or fill up the form of one, as well as a lawyer. We are told that great reforms have been effected: great they may be, but miserably small in

comparison with those that remain to be accomplished. The whole system of the law of real property in this country, is a disgrace to the civilization and intelligence of the age. Generation after generation of lawyers have helped only to complicate and obscure what was tangled and dark enough before, till the evil has reached such a height, that we are sometimes informed there is not an indefeasible title to an estate in the whole kingdom. Not that there are any adverse claims to ninety-nine out of every hundred ; but because some ancient formulæ of the law may not have been complied with, in by-gone centuries, or some equally valid reason. Is it not monstrous for common sense to hear it proclaimed, that a man cannot make out a good title to an estate, which has been in his possession, and that of his family for years, and his right to which is disputed by no one ? Yet such the law often declares.

Any one who has watched the progress or the introduction of any measure of legal reform in Parliament must have observed that nearly all the opposition or obstruction it has met with, has been from the lawyers themselves. A lawyer's education seems to teach him to watch for objections to everything, not to seek for facts and arguments in its support. They can always see clearly the difficulties that may arise under a reform —they are the gnats that he *cannot* swallow ; but he overlooks, or slurs over, the hideous mass of evils intended to be removed —the camel that he gulps without effort. Thus not only do lawyers thrive by litigation, but they obstruct the removal of the abuses of law which lead to it, and as the number of lawyers increases, so do their power and influence, and so does danger to the common weal.

As for the “general business” conducted by attorneys, the less a man entrusts them with it, the better for him. Not only are attorneys generally bad men of business, from managing matters differently from any one else, but it is undeniable that they have an awkward habit of getting up a “row” out of the most simple things. A man who has not sense enough to ma-

nage his own affairs, is certainly not wise enough to be entrusted with an attorney.

Mr. Falcon was one of those flourishing members of the profession, who combine the business of money-lender, or money-agent, with that of the law. Not that he would have admitted the soft impeachment on any account; but it is certain that Mr. Falcon's unexceptionable cab, and admirable little bachelor establishment, would scarcely have been paid for out of the genuine six-and-eight-pences. For Mr. Falcon did not seek for vulgar common-law litigation in general. When he issued a writ it was generally for a few hundreds due on a bill or a bond; and the names on the writ often had handles to them, and the owners of the names nodded to Mr. Falcon in the park, and cried, "How are you, old fellow?" in the most affable manner imaginable when they called on him at his house.

Nothing pleased Mr. Falcon better than to have the "management" of anything for anybody. He seldom made out a bill of costs for such things; he acted in the most charmingly friendly manner, and slipped the "fifty" or the "hundred" pound note of his gratified client into his pocket with the most unconscious air in the world. It is quite true that if his clients had possessed any brains—which they seldom did—they might have managed the business quite as well themselves, and saved the bank-note; but that was no affair of Mr. Falcon's.

It may be readily conceived that he was well satisfied with the offer of the guardianship of Master Dick. The heir to nearly three thousand a-year might be extremely useful; and if there were any pickings to be made during the minority, Mr. Falcon knew how to make them as well as most men.

Mrs. Bennoch, therefore, found him the most attentive of solicitors. He called nearly every day; he treated her with as much respect as if she had been born a duchess; he brought charming little presents for Rose; and he thoroughly captivated Dick by his liberal "tips." Mrs. Bennoch liked him amazingly; he thoroughly rid her of the presence of Weazel,

for one day when the little man called, she “referred him to her solicitor, Mr. Falcon, of Brook Street,” in a manner that perfectly astounded him. He *did* go to Mr. Falcon, who treated him quite politely, gave him no information of any kind, and showed himself more than a match for his cunning little visitor. Weazel felt it, and Weazel trembled.

There was one person whom Mr. Falcon could not succeed in captivating at present—Rose Bennoch. The presents were received and acknowledged by her mother’s command; but they were certainly not prized for the giver’s sake. Rose might have found it difficult to tell why she could not like Mr. Falcon, but she was thoroughly conscious of the very opposite feeling. She did not even admire him, yet he was very good-looking; but then the glance of his eyes did not please Rose, and the curl of his mouth occasionally made her young blood run cold. Oh, Rose, Rose! had it been ever thus!

Rose was now at a ladies’ college, where she was taught so many things that it is wonderful how she remembered the names of them. She was a most apt scholar, and a most diligent one. The moment she perceived her deficiency in anything, she strove with all her energy to overcome it; and she generally succeeded. She was liked by her companions, too, though all noticed the same strong tendency to “secreetiveness” (as phrenologists term it), which had marked her earliest years in the dark alley. It might easily be accounted for in her past history; but what it might lead to in the future was a problem not without danger.

The day at length arrived when the petition touching the future guardianship of Master Richard Bennoch was to be heard before the Lord Chancellor. Mr. Falcon called in good time to conduct Mrs. Bennoch and Dick to the court. Mrs. Bennoch was attired in her best “weeds,” and her whole appearance might have been pronounced formidable. Dick was squeezed into a suit of black, which seemed to nip him everywhere. Dick’s clothes always seemed to be too

tight for him, especially of late, as the unaccustomed good living that now fell to his share made him get desperately fat.

Most people know the Lord Chancellor's Court at Westminster, with its close atmosphere and grave dulness; its rows of horsehair-wigged barristers; its unhappy-looking suitors, smug attorneys, and gaping public; its pale venerable president, and courtly mace-bearer, secretary, registrar, and other attendants, not forgetting the criers, who are always making noise by hissing "sht-tsh," or shouting "silence" when nobody's saying anything, but just to look like attending to duty. Those who don't know the place have lost little that is entertaining thereby, and may at least heartily congratulate themselves on not being constrained to know it intimately.

Mr. Falcon elbowed his way through the crowd of idlers, conducting Mrs. Bennoch to the attorneys' bench below the judges' secretaries. On the same bench Mr. Weazel was already seated, and grinned and made the most polite bow in the world when he saw Mrs. Bennoch and her solicitor. The former only cast a look of hatred and defiance at him, but the latter gave him a nod of acknowledgment which meant, "I don't want any closer intimacy."

Few things are more disagreeable than sitting and waiting in court for your own cause to be called on. What the deuce do you care about anybody else's cause? And how very uninteresting they all seem, especially chancery ones where, if the lawyers *do* venture on a joke (and it's astonishing what a long way a very small joke goes with them), the fun is so purely technical that clients cannot understand it. In fact, they seldom see much fun in chancery at all. Mrs. Bennoch had to submit to this slow torture this morning, and it did not tend to soothe the natural irritability of her temper, excited, moreover, by the business in hand and the sight of Weazel. As for that little man, he seemed perfectly happy and good-humored, sitting beside his own solicitor, who, in rat-like look and general seediness, strongly resembled himself.

The cause now on was something about contempt. Some contumacious suitor had refused to obey an order of the court directing him to do something which it was impossible for him to do. He was to deliver up a certain identical grey mare, which grey mare no one knew what had become of. It would have been of no avail for him to tender a sum of money in place of the mare—besides which he had none to tender—but the Shylock of Chancery insisted on the mare and nothing but the mare, and in consequence of the mare not being produced, the contumacious suitor had been sent to prison about four years before, for “contempt of the High Court of Chancery.” No doubt this reads like romance; but the suit is a fact—the suitor is a living and breathing fact—and the prison holds him within its walls to this day for this very contempt.

But what did Mrs. Bennoch care about the grey mare, and the man in prison, and contempt of court? After all, too, the motion, or the petition, or whatever it was, ended in nothing; or, at all events, it did not end in producing the grey mare, or in letting the contumacious suitor out of prison.

“*In re Richard Bennoch, a minor,*” was at length called on, to the great relief of those interested in the case. And now up rose a gentleman in a silk gown and a powdered wig, and addressed his lordship the judge. What he said—at least, as he said it—does not much matter. The sum of it was, that it was necessary to appoint a guardian or guardians of the person and estate of Richard Bennoch, heir, &c., &c., &c.

So far, so good. The learned gentleman presumed there would be no objection to appointing the young gentleman’s mother as *one* of his guardians; but it seemed right that there should be a male guardian also, and there happened to be a gentleman who had been the most intimate and devoted friend of the late Mr. Bennoch (the minor’s father); in fact, who by the most diligent exertions and the sacrifice of his time and his means had succeeded in restoring to Mr. Bennoch the estate of which he had been unjustly dispossessed

by others. The gentleman in question was willing, from the same disinterested motives of friendship as had hitherto actuated him to accept that office (arduous and responsible though it might be). In fact, Mr. Weazel—”

At this word, up sprang Mrs. Bennoch from her seat, bursting from the grasp which Mr. Falcon made at her arm, and towering like another fury.

“It’s a lie—it’s all lies! he’s a mean, pitiful, lying scoundrel, he is!” she screamed, pointing with outstretched arm at the alarmed and cowering little man whose name had just been uttered.

So sudden had been her movement—so quickly had she hurled her denunciation at his head, that no one had been able to interrupt her; and even when she had paused in her sentence, scarcely any one seemed to know what to do or say. The crier, who had stood gazing bewildered with his mouth open, at length mechanically cried, “Silence!” which brought every one a little to his senses.

“Who is this lady?” asked the chancellor, in amazement, while young barristers in the back benches nudged one another and giggled with delight; and the mace-bearer leant over the green baize desk before him to look at her, and the secretary and the registrar stood up for the same purpose.

“I believe this is Mrs. Bennoch, my lord,” answered the learned gentleman whose speech she had interrupted.

“Yes, my lord,” cried the lady herself, heedless of Falcon’s tugs at her dress and entreaties to sit down; “and I’d rather see my son in his grave than let that little scoundrel—*look at him, my lord!*—have anything to do with him.”

“You really must not interrupt the court, my good lady, and the language you have used is a gross contempt of it. Your wishes shall be attended to, and I have no doubt the very able counsel who represents your interests will take care that every argument is used by him to promote them.”

The old gentleman’s quiet and dignified speech somewhat

soothed the fierce temper; but more so, perhaps, did the assurance that her wishes should be attended to.

“Wait one moment,” said his lordship, as she sat down, and addressing the counsel. “Does the mother propose any guardian in place of this Mr. Weazen?”

“Weazel, my lord,” said the *other* counsel, correcting him. “Yes—we propose Mrs. Bennoch’s solicitor, in whom she has great confidence—a gentleman of standing and of property.”

“How old is the minor?”

“Over fifteen, my lord.”

“Then let him step into my private room;” and his lordship retired, and Dick was conducted into his lordship’s presence.

Nobody has been able to get hold of a reliable account of Dick’s interview with the chancellor. Dick would only tell that his lordship was a “jolly old cock,” and asked him “all sorts of rum questions.” But it appears that he asked him the most important one, namely whom *he* would prefer for his guardian. Of course Dick, who hated Weazel, named Mr. Falcon, though it is to be feared that when pressed for his reasons, Dick found no better one than that he (Mr. Falcon) was an “out-and-out tip.” With that reason the chancellor was obliged to be content; or, rather, he probably saw the mischief of appointing a guardian so thoroughly distasteful to the mother as Weazel; and, no doubt, he considered it also highly beneficial to the youth’s worldly interests to have them watched over by a lawyer.

At all events Mr. Falcon was appointed, and Weazel was defeated in his object. Henceforth he devoted himself to revenge. Gladly would he have robbed the Bennochs of their estate now; but how could he do so without exposing his own villainy in the past?

Weazel set to work to scheme—scheme—scheme.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“ARCADES AMBO.”

THE decision of the Lord High Chancellor was by no means satisfactory to Mr. Weazel. Indeed, it was the heaviest disappointment he had experienced since he first undertook to make Bill Bennoch, deceased, a man of property. What! had he labored, and plotted, and lied, and done other little deeds that he dared not to call by their right names, even to himself, only to find himself rewarded with a small slice of the acquired property, and then sent about his business? It was too cruel: and he gnashed his teeth, and grinned in his own unpleasant and wicked way, to such an extent as often to frighten the miserable old woman who now waited on him, *vice* Peg Todd, departed to the north:

But Weazel was not fool enough to waste his time long in impotent rage or reproaches against his ill fortune. Besides which, Weazel did not believe in fortune at all: he was strongly impressed with the idea that his fortune had been, was, and would be, precisely what he chose to make it. Therefore, after easing off his first fury by swearing awfully, and throwing a few things at the head of his venerable domestic aforesaid, he sat down to consider quietly what he should do next. He wanted revenge, and he wanted money. It would be difficult to say which of those two commodities he wanted the more at that moment; but it is quite certain, that in a short time thence, he would very much prefer the money. And, moreover, if he got the Bennochs' money, he would get revenge with it, the pleasantest sort of revenge, too, for Weazel could

think of no direr punishment to any man than that of taking from him his property.

It was quite in Weazel's power to rob Mrs. Bennoch and her children of every thing they possessed, by a mere word. Weazel knew that, and he knew the consequences, also, that in punishing them he would be providing himself with a long journey at her Majesty's expense. *That* game was not to be thought of. Suppose he should produce a will of Bill Bennoch, just discovered, and constituting himself Dick's guardian? Certainly Bill had never made such a will, but he *might have* done so, and might have stowed it away in some odd corner: and then Weazel could write so exactly like Bill's signature, that—no, he thought he had better leave it alone.

At last he found himself thinking a great deal about Mr. Falcon, Mrs. Bennoch's new solicitor. Weazel was slightly afraid of him. This was not complimentary to Mr. Falcon, for Weazel was never afraid of a person whom he believed to be honest, nor of a fool, nor of a rogue of less calibre than his own, but he quailed before a superior genius in his own line. And this is exactly what he believed Mr. Falcon to be.

The rather vague idea that he began now to form was, that he might enter into some compact or understanding with Falcon, to secure advantages to both of them—advantages which neither could acquire without the other's aid. The difficulty was not so much how to open the matter to Falcon—for Weazel, having once made up his mind that the attorney was a rogue, he felt no great fear on *that* point—but what precise inducements to hold out for the desired alliance. It would not exactly be prudent to go and say, “I got Bennoch that property by an act of roguery. If I confess it, the property goes, and *your* views with it, whatever they may be.” Because Falcon would certainly reply, “Go and confess it, and be transported—you know very well you dare not—so be off, and don't trouble me.”

While Weazel was thus meditating and puzzling his brains

how to act, a knock was heard at his street door, that is to say, *he* heard it, but not his old servant, who was rather deaf.

"Hi! old un! go and open the door, you deaf old brute!" the latter part of the sentence was *sotto voce*, not so much out of respect for the old lady's feelings, as to avoid a row with her, which he occasionally had.

"Here's Mister Peck," cried the old woman, returning, and ushering the railway guard into the room.

"Ah! Peck! how are you?" cried Weazel, "I'm sure I'm delighted to see you," while, in truth, he wished him at Jericho, or a place far more unpleasant still.

"I thought I'd just call in and see you," said Peck; "how are you getting on with your new servant?"

"Ah! pretty well; but she's a regular old she devil, and a thief," he said, in a loud whisper.

"I dare say you don't give her a chance to take much, eh?" laughed Peck.

"Certainly not—of course not," said Weazel. "And where have you been lately?"

"Oh, I go north every other day, as far as Stumpington, generally; I dare say you know the place, don't you?" he asked, looking very hard at Weazel.

"I know it slightly," was the reply.

"A friend of mine there, told me he knew you," continued Peck.

"Indeed! who is he?"

"He's the parish clerk—Crank."

"Oh! ah! yes! just so, I recollect; I had to get a copy of the register of a marriage once in Stumpington," answered Weazel.

"Yes, so he said," replied Peck, quietly. "And the leaf was torn off, I think, wasn't it?"

"Yes, now you remind me, I believe it was," answered Weazel, keeping a quiet countenance, but feeling far from easy in his mind.

"Heard anything of the Bennochs lately?" asked Peck.

This sudden jump from the certificate to the Bennochs, rather more disconcerted Weazel, who stammered a good deal in replying, and made Peck feel more than ever convinced there was some roguery which had been worked by Weazel, and which was connected with the Bennochs, and with the certificate; for it must be borne in mind, that Peck knew little of law, or of the exact merits of the case of Bennoch and Lorimer, and was therefore not aware that the cause had actually turned on the question of Bennoch's legitimacy.

"Have you ever heard anything of Peg?" asked Peck.

"Not a word, the hussy!" answered Weazel, who was glad of a change of subject, though even this one was not the most agreeable in the world, for reasons we shall find out some day.

"I saw her once since she left you," said Peck, as if telling nothing remarkable.

"You did? when? where?"

"I saw her a long ways north; she was in most respectable service, but I don't mean to tell you where, because I promised I wouldn't."

"Ah! very well," answered Weazel.

"I wonder whose child she could have been?" continued Peck, half-thinking aloud.

"What does it matter? why do you think about it at all?" asked Weazel, rather sharply.

"Because I think she'll find out some day; she's very sharp, and I'm not sure she's not on the scent now."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said Weazel, hastily, "she's the child of some tramp, of course, who left her at the door of that miserly old rogue, Todd. A precious fool he was to take care of her, and leave her on *my* hands."

"I don't think he'd have done *that* voluntarily," said Peck.

"I wish he hadn't done it at all," answered Weazel.

After a little further chat on various topics of no great interest, Mr. Peck, who was daily improving in intelligence, as if

his constant whirl on the railway had shaken up and enlivened his wits, took his departure.

Weazel felt extremely uncomfortable after he had gone. He was a thorough rogue, but a terrible coward into the bargain, so that he was destined to be in a constant state of fear from the consequences of his own deeds. A sort of retribution this!

Two hours later in the day, a handsome cab stopped at Weazel's door, and Job Peck, jumping down from behind it, thundered such a knock on it as must have astonished the knocker and the neighborhood, and was distinctly audible even to the old servant herself.

"Mr. Falcon," screamed the old woman.

"Show him in, you old screech-owl," was her master's reply.

Mr. Falcon walked in, and gave a slight nod to Weazel, who handed him a chair, and begged him to be seated.

"I dare say you guess what I've come about," said Falcon, in an easy, off-hand manner.

"Not exactly," said Weazel, with an obsequious bow.

"Is there anybody within hearing?" asked Falcon.

"No one; my old servant is as deaf as a post."

"So much the better—now, then, to business. Your friend Mr. Peck, my groom's brother, has just been with me. Why, sir, I know your whole game—you're a *forger*!"

Weazel shook with rage and fear; he positively could not move neither hand nor foot; not even tongue or eyes would do their office, so completely paralyzed was he by this abrupt announcement. It was a master-stroke on the part of Falcon, for he saw immediately a confirmation of what he had said, written as plainly as if in black and white. Had he approached the subject carefully, beat about the bush, hinted, cross-questioned, and so forth, Weazel would have been on his guard, and was so skilful of fence, that it is doubtful whether Falcon would have learnt what he wished to know. But by blurting out as an approved fact what in truth he only *suspected*, he had jumped straight into the needful proof of it.

" You see it's of no use to play any tricks with me, or to resort to any subterfuges. Here is what you have done. You knew that your drunken friend Bennoch was illegitimate. You were determined to make him out legitimate; you went to Stumpington, and managed to tear a leaf out of the register; you then forged a copy of a certificate of marriage between Bennoch's father and mother, purporting to be copied from the very page you had torn out. You did the signature of the parson quite correctly; innocent people swore it was a true copy; your case was proved. You outrageous scoundrel!"

And here Mr. Falcon looked so indignantly virtuous, that the trembling and scared Weazel began to think he had made a mistake in his character altogether.

" Now, sir," cried Falcon, " what have you got to say for yourself?"

" What are you going to do?" gasped Weazel.

" What am *I* going to do? what should I do, but send for an officer, and give you in charge at once?"

" You've no proofs," said Weazel, trying to pluck up a little courage, as the first horror passed off.

" Haven't I?—we'll soon see about that," answered Falcon, with a laugh.

That laugh, however, spoilt his game, and gave Weazel courage. As some of the little man's faculties recovered in some measure from their sudden paralysis, he began to reflect in his usual cunning way, and the result was a conviction that if Falcon had meant to proceed to extremities with him at once, he would not have come to his house publicly, as he had done, but would have had him arrested by the police at once. Still he judged it safer to be very cautious, and to show not too much confidence.

" Excuse me for suggesting," said Weazel, " that supposing, for the sake of argument, I had done what you say, your giving me in charge and proving the accusation, would be simply depriving your clients of their property."

“Well?”

“Well; I don’t think you would wish to do that,” said Weazel.

“Wish to do it; perhaps not; but what alternative have I;” asked Falcon.

“The alternative, even supposing your accusation were true, of holding your tongue,” suggested Weazel.

“Compromising a felony!”

“I beg your pardon: but I told you just now, you had no proofs. And permit me to observe that you are not bound to seek for any in an accusation grounded on mere absurd surmises. Hold your tongue, and I don’t see who suffers by it—certainly not yourself.”

“And most certainly *not yourself*, my little man,” answered Falcon. “Upon my soul, you’re a capital pleader.”

“I always thought I ought to have belonged to that profession,” said Weazel.

“The devil you did! a nice black sheep you’d have added to the flock. But wait a minute, sir; I find that you have obtained altogether about a thousand pounds from the late Mr. Bennoch.”

“He owed it me—”

“Tut, tut,” interrupted Falcon. “I know all about that. First then, sir, listen to this—that sum of one thousand pounds must be paid to me within one week of this date.”

“You’re joking—you don’t mean it,” cried Weazel, in alarm.

“I never joke on matters of such a nature,” was the quiet reply. “That sum must be paid me within one week or—a police office—that’s all.”

“It’s impossible,” cried Weazel.

“Therefore it will be done,” answered Falcon, parodying Necker.

“I haven’t got the money,” said Weazel.

“Not exactly in your pocket, I dare say, but nevertheless you’ll get it.”

"I won't—fury and—" and he jumped from his seat, and seemed as if he were going to throw himself upon Falcon. But the latter was no coward, and was certainly more than a match for Weazel in bodily strength. So he sat quite composedly, while the little man gnashed his teeth and stamped on the floor.

"I defy you!" he cried; "I defy you—do your worst. You want to rob me—you shan't—do your worst and may you—"

"Don't swear, it's very offensive," said Falcon; "then we quite understand one another. I shall consider it my duty to stay here while my servant drives to the police station and procures an officer."

So saying he threw up the window to call Job.

Weazel laid his hand heavily on Falcon's arm, the latter turned.

"Be still," cried Weazel; "I'll—I'll—"

"All right—one week then—good-day." And carelessly humming an air, Falcon left the house and drove home.

Midnight had come, and still Weazel's haggard face was hidden in his hands, as he rested his bursting head on the table and moved not.

has done and must begin; and has it—now with a smile—
good?—no?—He said would of going away and it was between
a great storm & sixteen saw him break out over water, and said
—now stop and sit down—danger will be far away to him
no longer. has done and has said—now with a smile—
knott off
now now now
you have done now now now don't draw now

CHAPTER XXXII.

OVER THE WATER.

THERE are worse places in the world than Boulogne-sur-Mer. If the society there be not of the highest class, it is pleasantly accessible; if it be not of the purest in point of morals, it is easy and amusing. Fastidious people should religiously shun it, for their notions are quite certain to be shocked during the first twenty-four hours of their stay. No one should take his maiden aunt, from whom he expects a good legacy, to spend a summer at Boulogne, and introduce her to the general run of people to be met in the lively watering-place; or she may happen to form unfavorable opinions as to her nephew's tastes, predilections, and associates. A clergyman of the strictly evangelical school will hardly find the Boulognese to his taste, and Quakers are certainly scarce within its precincts. There are handsomer towns, more attractive watering-places, more fashionable company, than Boulogne and its belongings; but for easy going mortals—sinners such as the world in general is composed of—we repeat that there are worse places in the world than Boulogne-sur-Mer.

Thither sped Lorimer Littlegood, in the good steamer Princess Celestine, with a hundred other true Britons of both sexes. After all, there is more variety of life to be seen on board a steamer than anywhere else until sea sickness begins, and then all, or nearly all, are alike. On this occasion the weather was fine and the sea calm, and the merry faces of the passengers *en route* to Paris were not destined to be paled by sudden qualms, nor the sensitiveness of young lovers to be

shocked by a sudden run to leeward, or a sudden demand for steward and cognac.

There were all sorts of people on board : one or two noblemen with families, servants, and carriages and horses ; one or two railway contractors rushing off to Paris to ask, perhaps, two or three questions of their *confrères* there, which would be answered in five minutes, but which were, nevertheless, worth a personal visit to the French capital, from being too momentous to be entrusted to the post or the electric telegraph ; one or two milliners and linendrapers going to seek fresh "articles" of the latest *mode*, to dazzle the eyes of the Cockneys ; a few fast men who found London for the present just a little too hot for them ; several members of respectable middle-class families, who looked upon a trip to Paris as the highest of earthly enjoyments, until they had tried it, when they generally were very glad to get home again, being thoroughly disgusted at the price of everything, the absence of tea and beer, and the extraordinary way in which Parisians pronounce their own language, so completely unlike the accent of Clapham and Highgate. There were a few Frenchmen, happy enough to return to their *belle France*, but by no means looking so ; for it is a remarkable fact that a Frenchman always looks wretched on a journey, and especially on a steamer. He is usually muffled up from head to foot, whether at Christmas or in the dog days ; never changes or washes himself before starting, and altogether resembles a Houndsditch Jew in wet weather, more than a civilized Christian. All these people, and a great many more (we forgot to mention the two authors who were going to look out for theatrical novelties in Paris, to translate into "original" pieces for the London stage) stared at one another in the ordinary and approved style, and stared at the sea and the sky, and the smoke from the funnel, and the machinery of the engines ; but of course nobody spoke to anybody, unless the anybody and nobody had been duly introduced to one another in former days.

Lorimer Littlegood was not silent, and as he was too much of a gentleman and an Englishman to speak to a stranger, we may be sure he had friends on board. And, indeed, one of the young ladies whom he addressed was very pretty, and seemed to be so pleased with his conversation, that more than one man on deck envied Lorimer ; and more than one young lady felt that it would not be absolutely disagreeable to change places with the pretty young lady in question.

“ You’ve been in Paris before, of course ? ” asked the young lady’s mamma.

“ Only once, and for a few days,” answered Lorimer.

“ And you think it the most delightful place in the world, don’t you ? ” she asked again.

“ It’s hardly fair in me to answer, perhaps,” said Lorimer ; “ but I confess I admired it very much.”

“ It’s the only place in the world fit to live in, that’s *my* opinion,” said a fast-looking man, joining in the conversation. He was the young lady’s brother.

“ It’s really the only good place in the world to live in constantly. Take Rome—who the deuce could endure a summer in it ? Besides, you’re bored to death by people eternally talking about the Coliseum, and the Forum, and the Pantheon, and everything else that you were sick of long before you left school. As for Naples, it’s very pleasant, and wicked, and all that sort of thing, but the summer is something terrific, and so are the mosquitoes and the beggars. Florence is a nice place, but too small. Berlin is detestable. Vienna is better, but English are snubbed there. Brussels is all very well as a miniature edition of Paris ; but Paris itself is unrivalled.”

“ You leave London altogether out of the list,” said Lorimer.

“ Because it is infinitely below any of the places I have mentioned. I leave it out as I leave out Dublin or Ispahan ; because, I don’t suppose any body will contend that London has the slightest pretensions to be an agreeable place of residence.”

"Nonsense, Fred, why should you abuse your own country?" cried his sister.

"I don't abuse my country, not a bit of it. I am exceedingly proud of being a John Bull, I assure you. But there are two things I *can't* admire; and those are my country's climate, and my country's capital city."

"Architecturally speaking?" asked some one.

Fred burst out laughing.

"'Pon my soul I never thought of that at all. If you fancy I care for Paris because it has finer public buildings than London, you're greatly mistaken. I don't care a fig for architecture, as long as the houses we live in are comfortable. I have scarcely any taste for sculpture--none for painting. I never read a guide-book in my life, and I believe that's the way people usually get themselves up in the fine arts; but what I like is Paris *life*. You can really live there--find something to do--never think of committing suicide, or getting married, or coming to any other frightful end; but enjoy every day you breathe, and by the way, you *can* breathe in Paris, which is more than you can predicate of London."

"But surely, Fred, there are places of amusement enough in London?" said his mamma.

"Places of amusement! Now, my dear good mother, will you tell me seriously that there are many *amusing places* in London? Talk of educating the people; whenever I hear or am told of that extremely heavy assembly, called the House of Commons, discussing *that* subject, I always think what a vast pity it is they don't first educate themselves, for ninety-nine out of every hundred of its members are lamentably uneducated on the simple subject of amusement. They prove it plainly enough when they talk about British Museums, Scientific Institutions, and National Galleries as places of amusement and relaxation! We really have scarcely a place of amusement--that is, an *amusing place*--in London."

"Surely there are theatres enough!"

"Plenty of theatres: but who goes to them, and who ever comes away with the notion that he has been amused in them? Frightful melodramas, bad music, farces spoilt from the French in translating, and spoilt a second time in the acting, varied with a little coarse buffoonery here and there; 'pon my soul, I don't know more melancholy places than the theatres of London."

"No doubt you prefer its casinos," said his mother, angrily.

"No, I don't; they *ought* to be much more amusing than the theatres, but they're not. The genius of dullness has so laid hold of the Cockney public, that I've often thought they would have forgotten how to smile at all, if they had not had *Punch* to read, and Albert Smith to hear."

"*A propos*, then," cried his sister: "there's *one* amusing place in London."

"Exactly so: but then ——"

"Stay," said his sister. "If the Egyptian Hall be really, now, in your opinion, an amusing place, and it is clear the Cockney public appreciate the amusement, why don't we have more amusing places?"

"Because there's only one Albert Smith, I suppose," answered her brother. "He has raised a small crowd of imitators, but that's just a proof of English dullness: they can only *imitate*. Albert Smith's success has been a legitimate one, earned by originality and wit. Why on earth cannot something original and witty be given to us in some other shape—on the stage, or in any other form? I answer again, because there are no more originals—no more Albert Smiths. This is not so in France. Look how fresh amusements spring up every day in Paris: see what a flood of new romantic pieces constantly pours in—plenty of bad ones, no doubt, but many excellent, and none so bad as an English *original* piece of the present day."

"Pardon me," said Lorimer, "but surely we have had one or two tragedies produced."

"Oh, if you call five act tragedies amusing, I won't enter the list of argument with you," cried Fred, laughing, "for my part, I should as soon think of going to a funeral to raise my spirits, as to a theatre to find amusement in that horrible invention of barbarous ages—a tragedy."

The discussion ended, or rather Fred's harangue, and Lorimer found consolation in chatting with the sister.

"But you are not sure of going on to Paris, are you?" asked she.

"I'm sorry to say not: I'm in search of a runaway, as you know, and I feel remarkably like a detective policeman. I've traced him as far as Boulogne, but whether he has remained there, or gone to Paris, I cannot tell at present."

"But he may have gone to many other places," she said, in a tone of a little more disappointment than she exactly wished to show.

"That's not very likely," replied Lorimer, "because Boulogne leads to nowhere, except Paris. Calais, on the contrary, is on the highway of Belgium and Germany, besides Paris."

"If you should succeed in getting back your property, will you not be *very* happy?" she said, after a pause.

"Upon my word, I don't think I shall," he answered, with a laugh. "When I was ruined, as it is called, I fancied that nothing but a sentence of death or transportation could be more miserable than the fate allotted to me; and yet, in a month or two, here I am light-hearted, if not really happy, and contented, though I don't know exactly how I am to exist from day to day."

"Were you not happy in your prosperous days, then?" demanded the young lady.

"No: but I don't mean to say I was miserable. The truth is I wanted mental occupation. I am perfectly convinced now that no man, with brains larger than a sparrow's, can be happy long without employment of some kind."

"But what do the very rich do?" said she; "are they all unhappy?"

"On the contrary, I am inclined to think that the very rich, in our own country, are, or ought to be, the happiest of all people. But they have plenty of occupation, at least those who perform even a portion of their duties. There are estates to look after, and the poor on those estates; there are parliamentary duties to be performed—no light ones in these times. There is the increasing knowledge of the age in every department of science and art to be kept up with. I don't think a man with a hundred thousand a-year need have a heavy hour on his hands, while at the same time he is exempt from all the personal cares and privations which fret the mind and wear out the body."

"I wonder how many who possess that wealth really do as you say?" she remarked.

"You wonder how many are happy," he answered, "very few I fear! It seems to be man's destiny to misuse his gifts. We seldom look for happiness on the right road; even if she be close at hand; we probably look the wrong way, and hasten in pursuit of some *ignis fatuus*, called pleasure. Still there are a few exceptions, and they suffice to show us what we all ought to do."

"But——," she hesitated. "Do you know I'm afraid you'll take me for a mathematician in petticoats if I venture on an argument about such subjects. But if your theory be true, it would be impossible for the poor man to have the same happiness as the man of large wealth."

"It would," replied Lorimer, "but, as we don't live *logically*,—and I suppose never shall,—I dare say the poor man quite as often *does* find happiness as a rich one, because he quite as often attains what his ideal of happiness is, though it may be far from *true* happiness after all. What does it all prove? That there is no real happiness in the world, I suppose! I really cannot say that such is the case, but theolo-

gians tell us so, and we have all helped as much as we can to prove that they are right."

And now the Princess Celestine was approaching the two piers of Boulogne, between which she shot most dexterously into placid water, amidst the shouts of the captain in English and the yells of the French officials in French. And then began the scene of everybody driving into the cabin for a cloak or a coat, or a shawl, or an umbrella, or a stick, or a mysterious little parcel, or a bag or reticule of some kind. And then there was much fumbling in pockets for tickets, much screaming of mammas after vagrant offspring, much scolding of papas, much hurried whispering of young people whose conversation was not meant for everybody's ear, much *sacré-ing* of men on shore and swearing of men on board, much crowding, jostling, and ill-breeding, while one by one the Princess Celestine's passengers stepped on shore, and marched between the ropes extended from the Douane, to the entertainment of a great number of people whose daily delight is to criticize the appearance of the newly landed, especially when the weather is rough.

And inside the Douane, when their turn at last came, marched our friends, displaying two passports, one allowing Mr. Frederick Stanley, with his mother and sister, and the other permitting Mr. Lorimer Littlegood to travel to Paris and elsewhere.

"What hotel, my dear Fred?" asked Mrs. Stanley.

"I generally go to the *Hôtel des Bains*," was the reply, "but it's not altogether pleasant sometimes at low tide and in hot weather. " *Hôtel du Nord!*" he cried to the twenty touters, and immediately a vehicle belonging to that capital establishment was at their service.

"Won't you come with us, Mr. Littlegood?" said Mrs. Stanley, as Lorimer naturally hesitated to force his company on them.

"Come along, like a good fellow," added Fred, "you'll relieve me from a deal of anxiety. I'm in a horrible fright when

I have the responsibility of two otherwise unprotected females on my shoulders."

Lorimer needed no second invitation, and the little party were soon set down at the Hôtel du Nord, where they selected rooms, as the Stanleys did not intend to go on to Paris till next day, and ordered dinner, and made themselves as happy as possible under the circumstances.

The history of this joint visit was simple enough. Lorimer was in search for Mr. Bosher, from whom it was now thought much valuable information might be got concerning his property. The Stanleys were on a trip to visit a friend in Paris, and happened to start on the same day with Lorimer. Of course this was a purely accidental circumstance. It is quite true that Ellen Stanley had chanced to mention to Lorimer that they should leave London on that day, but it is not to be supposed that so trifling a matter as that remained in his mind. No doubt their meeting was purely accidental, and quite unexpected on either side.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE.

"AND a mighty pretty cannon it was, too," said an unmistakably Irish voice. "If ye keep up that game it's little chance I'll have with ye."

"You're a flatterer, Captain: you know your own skill so well that you can afford to praise my play," answered another smooth, oily, low-toned voice, unquestionably that of an Englishman.

"Another! By the powers you're getting a-head," cried the Irishman. "Forty-one plays twenty-nine. Devil a chance for me!"

"I'm certainly getting into good practice," replied the Englishman; and, elated with his skill, he made a miss and shot his own ball into a pocket besides.

"That's a little bit of luck for me," cried the Irishman. "Thirty-two—forty-one. Now, then! The deuce is in the tables, or the cues, or something," he cried, as he scored nothing.

His adversary played, made the cannon he intended to make, and accidentally pocketed the red ball also.

"Five more! why you'd beat Jonathan himself if you kept on like that. Upon my soul it's *you'll* have to give *me* points soon," cried the Irishman.

"I was always considered a tolerably good player," said the Englishman; "and, really, I think I'm improving."

"Of course ye are—improving a deal too fast," exclaimed the Irishman.

After a few more lucky strokes on the part of the English-

man, he had won the game. "That's two to you," said the Irishman. "Come, now, anyhow you'll allow I can't give you twenty."

"Well, really, I've happened to be very fortunate; but I think your superior play still justifies you in giving me twenty out of sixty."

"My superior play! Why, haven't ye beaten me every time by more than the twenty I gave ye?" cried the other.

"We've only played two games, you see," answered the Englishman, "and one sometimes gets a little luck."

"Luck!—it's the luck of old Nick ye have," was the reply. "It's the same thing whether it's play or luck, if it beats me, isn't it?"

"In one respect it comes to the same thing, certainly."

"Exactly so," answered the Irishman; "and I'll tell you what, I find it mighty dry work being beaten."

The Englishman smiled.

"Shall we order a little——"

"Of course we will," cried the other, ringing the bell without waiting for the conclusion of the sentence. "Here, *garçon*—I say—*dis-donc*—bring some *eau-de-vie de Cognac*, and look alive—*dépêchez-vous*."

The brandy was brought and mixed with a little cold water. Each gentleman sipped from his tumbler, and prepared for a fresh game.

After a little parley as to the terms of the new game, the Englishman at length consented to play, receiving only fifteen out of sixty, instead of twenty as heretofore. Still his luck clung to him, and he again won the game.

"The deuce is in it," cried the Irishman, who had lately been playing very wildly and missing strokes that he ought to have made. "I won't play any more."

"As you please," said the Englishman; "you shall have your revenge another time."

"Stay a minute," cried the other, "what do I owe you now?"

"Do you mean altogether?" asked his friend.

"Yes, altogether."

The Englishman methodically took out his pocket-book.

"Let me see," he began: "four games on Tuesday and four to-day, at five francs, that's forty francs. Brandy on Tuesday, two francs. Two bottles of champagne yesterday, ten francs. Two admissions to the theatre, last night, six francs. Loan on Monday, five francs; ditto on Tuesday, five francs——"

"Hold hard!—don't go on any more," cried the Irishman; "it isn't a pedler ye're dealing with, but a gentleman—just give us the total."

"The whole," said the other, smiling, amounts to ninety-four francs."

"I tell ye what it is, then—I'll play ye double or quits for the whole."

"Double or quits?"

"Yes, double or quits—I'll owe ye double or nothing."

"Really, I never play so high——"

"Nonsense—come on."

And the Englishman waived his scruples, and they played again. Let us look at the players.

The Irishman was a tall, powerful man, with immense whiskers, a very flashy style of dress, an air of bold impudence, and a loud voice. The Englishman was a short, fat, sleek-looking man, with a polished, bald head, dressed in black, modest-looking and mild-spoken. His figure was scarcely elegant when beheld without coat and waistcoat, leaning over the table, with one leg elevated in the air, to enable him to reach some tempting stroke.

There was plenty of brain visible in either of the opponents, and though in the ordinary business of life you would be puzzled to say which could better take care of his own interests, you would certainly stake odds on the Irishman being the better billiard player, even in spite of the games he had already lost.

The present one was much more closely contested ; and, after many changes of fortune, the Irishman at length won by two points.

“ We’re quits, then,” he said. “ Now, I tell you what it is—we’ll have one more game, and I’ll play you for the same sum—188 francs.”

“ Oh, dear ! no,” protested the other : “ besides, you see I’m no match for you at only fifteen out of sixty.”

“ Nonsense ; ye’ll beat me three times out of four on these terms : but I tell you what—I’ll give you twenty just for this once.”

The Englishman kept sipping his brandy-and-water while the Irishman kept trying “ fancy ” strokes on the table and missing them. Several of them the Englishman felt sure he could have made himself. Whether the brandy or the temptation was too strong for his prudence we do not know, but he yielded and consented to play for 188 francs.

The game seemed to be pretty well contested up to a certain point, when the Irishman, who had clearly been hitherto concealing his real power, “ came up with a rush,” as reporters of races say, and won easily.

“ And now, my boy, I’ll trouble you for 188 francs,” cried he, hitting the Englishman a hard smack on the back.

“ You took pretty good care not to play like that till you had a stake worth winning,” growled the Englishman.

“ What’s that ye’re saying, ye dirty little blackguard ? ” cried the other. “ Do you mean to cast reflections on my honor, eh ! sir ? ”

“ I mean to say you concealed your play,” replied the other, “ and I’m not going to be bullied by you, sir.”

“ Ye mean to accuse me of cheating ? By Jabers ! I’ll break every bone in yer skin, ye little thief of an attorney,” and he strode towards him, brandishing his cue in a most menacing style.

“ Go down on yer knees and beg my pardon, ye little thief,”

he cried, "or I'll beat ye as black as yer own coat, or your own dirty deeds."

"I'll do no such thing," said the other, retreating into a corner. "Police!" he began to shout.

"They won't understand English," cried the Irishman, and he raised his cue and struck at him, but the little man warded the blow with his own cue. Nevertheless, his position with this enraged giant in front of him was far from agreeable; but, just as the latter was aiming a second blow, the door of the room opened, and Lorimer Littlegood, with a glance of astonishment at the one and the other, seized the Irishman's arm and arrested the stroke.

"Mr. Littlegood!" exclaimed the Englishman.

"Eh! Littlegood! the devil!" cried the Irishman.

"Good day, Mr. Bosher—good day, Captain Kelly," said Lorimer, addressing both. "I'm happy to see you both so well, and both in such good society. But I'm afraid there was some little dispute which I have interrupted."

"Now, Littlegood, this is the happiest day of my life," cried Captain Kelly. "To think of our meeting again like this."

"You didn't expect it, I've no doubt," said Lorimer, with a smile.

"Me dear fellow, it's a happiness I never ventured to hope for. And to think of Mr. Bosher being a friend of yours—dear me; why, you never mentioned it, Bosher; let me shake hands with you, Bosher; all our quarrels are over, now that I know you're a friend of the best friend *I* ever had."

"You've an odd way of treating your best friends, I must say, Captain," remarked Lorimer.

"Oh, me dear fellow, I see you're mistaken about that little affair of Lavers; I'll explain it all to you. But don't let me detain you—I dare say you've business with Bosher—good day. Can't you just scribble an I.O.U.?" he whispered to the attorney.

"Here's the money, sir," answered the latter, handing the

Captain the 188 francs—a larger sum than he had touched for many days.

The Captain left the room, and Lorimer and Mr. Bosher were left alone.

"You are rather surprised to see me," said Lorimer.

"Yes, certainly, I really am," was the reply, rather confusedly uttered.

"Will you step with me to my room," said Lorimer, "as I wish to have some conversation with you, and a billiard-room is scarcely a convenient place for discussions like ours?"

Bosher made a bow, and followed him.

After dinner at the Hotel du Nord, Lorimer casually inquired of the waiter whether he happened to know a gentleman of the name of Bosher. The *garçon* confessed he had not, to his recollection, heard that name; but then English names were very difficult to remember, and besides, he found that gentlemen were often inquired after there by quite different names from those which they had given themselves. He supposed some English gentlemen had a *nom de voyage*, as well as their ordinary one. All this he uttered with much gravity, so that it was impossible to say whether he was laughing in his sleeve or not, for a French *garçon* excels even the best-trained English waiters in preserving an imperturbable countenance under trying circumstances.

Lorimer, smiling, proceeded to describe Mr. Bosher's rather peculiar personal appearance. The *garçon* suggested that it very much corresponded with that of Monsieur Smith, who had been staying some time in the town, and had been for a few days at that hotel.

"Of course it's Smith; he's sure to be Smith or Jones here," cried Fred.

"Not at all unlikely," coincided Lorimer. "Can you tell me where this Monsieur Smith resides now?"

"Yes, I can find out," answered the *garçon*.

In a minute or two he returned to say that Mr. Smith was

at that very moment playing at billiards in the hotel billiard room, with Monsieur le Capitaine.

"Who's *he*?" asked Fred Stanley.

"His name I forget; but he is a very grand captain, who has been all over the world, and fought everywhere, and is very brave indeed."

"No doubt," said Fred; "that is to say, that is his own account of himself—a very modest one, certainly."

"Stay a moment," said Lorimer; "it would be rather odd if I should happen to know Monsieur le Capitaine also. What is he like? Is he a tall man, with big whiskers, and a loud voice, and showy dress, and an Irishman?"

"*Mais oui, si, si,*" answered the *garçon*.

"Kelly, I have no doubt," cried Lorimer.

"What, the fellow that pounded Lavers so awfully in bed?" asked Fred.

"Yes," said Lorimer, coloring slightly, and glancing towards Miss Stanley, as he remembered how abominably her name had been mixed up with that affair.

She looked even more embarrassed than himself, but Mrs. Stanley, like a good-natured woman as she was, came to their rescue with some laughing remark, and Lorimer left the room to seek his friends.

He found them just at the critical moment we have described.

Captain Kelly and Mr. Bosher had picked up a kind of coffee-room acquaintance at Boulogne, and were accustomed to lounge about a good deal, and play an occasional game at billiards together. The Captain was, as usual, living on his wits; but those excellent commodities had not brought him very good supplies of late, so that he was keenly looking out for a well feathered pigeon to pluck. He soon discovered that Bosher had money, and he determined to bleed him as far as possible; but it was harder work than he anticipated, for he had an old bird, and a cunning one, to deal with.

When Bosher and Lorimer were alone, the former certainly looked rather disconcerted. But after a little reflection, it seemed to him that he had no special cause to be afraid of his client, for certainly he had fought his case out to the last ; he did not owe him money ; he had done him no special wrong.

“ We were all rather surprised at your sudden departure from England, Mr. Bosher,” began Lorimer.

“ My dear sir, I really could not help myself. I trust to do my duty to everybody ; but affairs had lately gone very unfortunately with me, and that suit of yours completed my troubles.”

“ It is precisely about that suit that I have come to you,” said Lorimer.

“ Then our meeting is not one of chance ?” asked Bosher.

“ Certainly not. I am over here for the express purpose of seeing you,” answered Lorimer.

This reply by no means gratified Mr. Bosher, who wished particularly to know how Lorimer had found him out ; but this his young client declined to tell him. He merely informed him that having heard that he, Bosher, was over in Boulogne, he had come over to inquire many things of him ; especially as to what was the positive truth regarding the transaction between Bill Bennoch’s father and Lorimer’s grandfather.

“ I don’t see what necessity there can be for any concealment in the matter,” he said, “ because nothing that you tell me can possibly injure yourself now ; besides, if the publication of it to the world could do so, I pledge my solemn word to keep it secret, however prejudicial the secrecy may be to my own interests. I have lately been advised by a kind friend in your own profession, and he tells me this : it is of no use for me to attempt to crush the claim of the present possessors of our property on the ground of Bennoch’s illegitimacy, supposing that could be proved (as *he* thinks it could) unless I first know whether *I* could recover the property on the other ground—that it was *not* wrongfully obtained by my own grandfather. Will you tell me this ?”

Bosher was silent for some time, as if in reflection. At last he answered :

"I will ; you shall have the whole history. But I shall give it you in writing, for it is a long and sad story. The day after to-morrow I will place it in your hands."

"May I depend on that?"

"You may."

They parted for the present.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IS HE JEALOUS?

LET it not be supposed that Lorimer Littlegood was so completely engrossed with his anxiety about the communication he was to receive from Mr. Bosher, as to think of nothing else. So far from this being the case, his thoughts were much more occupied with another subject. Was he, or was he not, to go to Paris? This question actually appeared, for the time, more important in his eyes than any other. On Mr. Bosher's reply depended perhaps his future prospects in this life—his ease and comfort, or his privation and poverty. On his journey to Paris, what could depend but a little temporary amusement? So he thought, at least, and therefore he was, of course, highly culpable in setting his heart on it so strongly. Yet if he could have looked a little farther into futurity, or even if he could have understood his own feelings a little better, he would have seen that his fate might depend quite as much on the Paris trip as on the lawyer's letter. How often are we watching with eager anxiety the turn of some great event on which we believe our destiny to hang, while some trivial occurrence of the moment which may really influence our whole future life is unheeded or unnoticed.

The question of the Paris trip was half solved for him by Bosher himself, for early in the morning he received the following note:—

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I have written an account of the transactions on which you wish for information; but before sending it

to you, must have your written promise not to read, or even open my communication, until you have entirely left this place. I presume you will go either to Paris or London. Wait till you reach one or the other, therefore, before you break the seal. I await your answer.

Yours,

“J. BOSHER.”

“What had I better do, Stanley?” asked Lorimer, showing the letter to Fred at the breakfast table.

“Do?—do what he tells you. Here, waiter, bring pen, ink, and paper. Now, Littlegood, write as I dictate. Call the old thief ‘My dear Sir,’ of course, and now go on—‘I am starting for Paris with some friends.’”

“But,” said Lorimer, hesitating—“that’s just the question.”

“There’s no question about it,” said Fred; “tell him you are off with us by the eleven o’clock train; so you won’t read a line of his last dying speech and confession till you get to Paris.”

“I’m half inclined to think I ought to return to London,” said Lorimer.

“I’ll be hanged if you ought,” cried Fred; “it would be a most base and un-christian like act on your part towards me. How *am* I to take care of these two respectable and otherwise unprotected females?”

“Thank you,” said Ellen, bowing.

“But,” observed Lorimer, “you are going to stay with friends, I believe?”

“They are—not I,” answered Fred. “You wouldn’t catch me going to take up my quarters with Mrs. Byerly Thomson—the woman would talk me to death in an hour. But on second thoughts, I *will* go to a friend’s, and you shall come too. Jack Fenton will be delighted to see both of us; and as he has very good quarters and plenty of money, we’ll turn in there. Regard your visit to Paris, my dear Littlegood, as a *fait accompli.*”

Lorimer was not likely to resist long ; so he sent Bosher a note giving the required promise, received subsequently a packet from that gentleman, and at eleven o'clock took his seat in the train opposite Miss Stanley, Fred being next him, and Mrs. Stanley *vis-à-vis* to her son.

“ What an improvement this on the diligences,” said Mrs. Stanley.

“ Yes,” answered her son : “ people are to be found in England who regret that the good old coaching days are past—they cannot any longer get boxed up in a little hole, where they could scarcely move, stifled with heat, dust, and dirty straw, or be rained upon by the pelting, pitiless storm outside, as they crept slowly up a long hill, cramped, numbed, cold, and moist. Deeply to be lamented, no doubt ; but I never heard any one, French or English, regret that the horrid old days of diligences were over. I would rather submit to forty lashes from a cat-o'-nine tails that repeat a three-and-a-half days’ journey I once made in the depth of winter in the *coupée* of a diligence from Paris to Lyons.”

“ Still we do lose the scenery in a railway train, Fred,” said his sister.

“ So much the better in France—or at all events, between Boulogne and Paris, for anything more stale, flat, and unprofitable (except to the cultivators and owners thereof) than the country along this route it would be difficult to imagine. Even in England there is not much lost, for pretty as English scenery is, it is mostly very much alike, and won’t bear looking at long—you may see quite enough of it from the window of an express train.”

“ You have no rural tastes, that’s clear,” said Lorimer. “ I confess I have sometimes wished for a stage coach to drive through the pretty old-fashioned villages that I admire more than anything in England, instead of stopping at those hideous road-stations on the railways.”

“ You have more poetry than I have,” answered Fred.

"There's very little of *that* left in England," said Lorimer, smiling.

"Do you really think so, Mr. Littlegood?" asked Ellen. "It seems to me that each age complains of the decadence of poetry. Byron used to believe, or to say, at least, that there was no poetry left, while he was personally disproving his own creed."

"He was the last of the poets of England, in my opinion," answered Lorimer. "Compare the poets of Queen Anne's age with those of Queen Elizabeth's, and see how the older ones surpassed the later ones in grandeur of thought and imagery. Let me tell you, however, that no one admires one of Queen Anne's poets, Pope, more than I do. I thoroughly enjoy his works; but still I enjoy them for their wit and wisdom—not for their poetry. He is the most delightful of versifiers; but can you believe that he ever experienced the enthusiasm of a true poet on beholding the works of nature, or on reading or hearing of the heroic deeds of men?"

"Queen Anne's has been called the great age of artificial poetry, has it not?" she asked.

"Yes; but I don't think the definition thoroughly correct—if by artificial they mean that men did not write poetry spontaneously then, as well as in the days of Elizabeth. It was rather that they lived more artificial lives, were part of a more cultivated society, and further removed from heroic times and the influence of heroic deeds."

"Then you believe that the more refined society becomes, the more poetry declines?"

"Or rather," said Lorimer, "the more *artificial* society becomes, the weaker and fainter becomes the poetic flame. In the present century there have been but two men gifted with the highest order of poetic genius—Scott and Byron—both of whom displayed a *power* worthy of the heroic ages. All the rest I should call milk-and-water poets, who write about flowers and running streams rather than the mighty passions of the

human heart, the great deeds of great men, or even flood and fell, the mountain, the storm, and the avalanche."

"You speak like a *man*," said Ellen, "for you show that you think power the highest quality poetry can possess."

"I am afraid I speak very dogmatically," he replied, laughing; "and I am sure very heretically in some people's opinions; but I assure you, I believe that poetry, without power (and I know none of the present day that has any) is as little likely to live as wine without a good dash of brandy in it is to last long."

"*A propos* of which," cried Fred, "as we are stopping at this place, Amiens, will you two intellectual folks step out and taste some wine? Littlegood can stick to brandy if he prefers it."

And the quartette entered the refreshment-room and ate with travellers' appetites; but Lorimer proved that if he liked spirit in poetry, he preferred drinking wine which contained but little of it. He even declined the *petit verre* after his cup of coffee, which Fred pronounced to be bad taste on his part.

"It's a curious fact," said Fred, "that four or five years ago you used to get capital dinners at that station, whereas now you never see anything but a hecatomb of roast fowls, a very miscellaneous pie, bad soup, and roast beef. In this I trace the evil influence of John Bull. The fellow will have something not only nutritive but solid to look at. I don't like that pile of fowls with their legs in the air, and the crush and rush you have to endure to enable you to dig a fork into one and carry it off in triumph. The old *table d'hôte* was far pleasanter, more satisfactory, and even cheaper."

"You're a dreadful *gourmand*, Fred," said his sister.

"A *gourmet*, my dear girl," he replied; "so much the better, 'he who has not taste in cookery cannot have it in literature,' says a certain novelist."

"Whose own taste in literature is of the highly artificial kind," answered his sister.

"His poetry is like an *omelette soufflée*, inflated, sweet, worked up with great care and labor, but unreal, unsatisfactory, artificial."

"You're a regular 'blue!'" cried her brother, "Littlegood is looking frightened at you already—no wonder."

"Indeed I'm not," said Lorimer; "but I'm glad to find Miss Stanley's opinion so exactly like my own on *one* point at least."

"Do you read many novels?" she asked.

"Very few, yet I have read all of his."

"And which do you like best?"

"The two last, because he had at length discovered a subject best suited to his cast of mind."

"But was not 'Pelham' equally well-suited?" she asked.

"Yes, quite so, to his mind as it then was," answered Lorimer; "but I think it has made great progress since then, though it has pursued no direct course. Bulwer sets the highest value on labor and perseverance in the pursuit of any art; and yet, strange to say, he has never steadily persevered in any one path of literature himself. He began with a fashionable novel (I omit the crude affair which has never been reprinted and may be considered as rejected by its author) then he gave us a semi-domestic one, then we had classic ones, sentimental ones, highway-heroic ones, historical ones, till at last we got to Shandean ones. And here at last I think he has discovered his real *forte*. He has not a classical mind, he is too fond of ornament and frippery; his historical portraits smack a little of melodrama; his highwaymen are simply sentimental ruffians, utterly absurd creatures altogether. But his satire, learning, knowledge of life, and appreciation of character make his last two novels the most delightful reading of the present day, always excepting Thackeray's works."

"Which I do not heartily like," said Ellen.

"Some day I hope to convert you," rejoined Lorimer, laughing.

And chatting thus, and on a dozen other subjects it is surprising how quickly time flew by till they reached Paris.

Here the party separated; for after seeing Mrs. and Miss Stanley safe in Mrs. Byerly Thomson's house, Fred and Lorimer drove to the elegant bachelor's residence of Mr. John Fenton.

This gentleman had an apartment of seven or eight rooms, on the first floor of a house in one of the best streets. The rooms were furnished in the best taste, with perhaps a little too much "fancy;" but still the error was on the side of refinement.

"Your master in?" asked Fred of the servant.

"Yes, sir."

"Take in this card."

In a minute the servant returned, and ushered in Fred and Lorimer.

"My dear Fred, I'm delighted to see you. You've come to stay with me?"

"Yes, if you can accommodate my friend Mr. Lorimer Littlegood also," and Fred introduced him.

"Only too happy; the longer you both stay the more contented shall I be."

Lorimer expressed his gratitude, and while Mr. Fenton was giving instructions to his servant about the luggage and the rooms for the new comers, he had a little opportunity of noticing his host.

Jack Fenton, as he was termed by his intimates, was a man of about eight-and-twenty years of age, small in stature and slightly built, but nevertheless of admirable proportions, and of most winning manners and address. His face was positively remarkable for its extreme and almost feminine beauty, so faultless was each feature, so delicately fair the complexion, so luxuriant and curling his bright brown hair. You

would certainly have pronounced his appearance effeminate, and you would have still further been convinced that he was so himself from the style of his furniture. Yet Jack Fenton was the best fencer, boxer, rider, swimmer, and shot in his circle, and that was a pretty extensive one. His delicate looking limbs had muscles of iron, and his personal strength quite confounded strangers. He had done the most daring deeds, his cool courage on all occasions was proverbial, his tastes were manly. An Irish friend once called him "a miniature giant," which was at least expressive.

Lorimer knew nothing of all this, and only thought what a good-looking little *petit-maître* Mr. John Fenton was.

"Charming rooms these, Mr. Fenton," said Lorimer.

"Don't tell him so; he's horribly conceited about them," said Fred, laughing.

"What, my old cynic!" cried Jack; "not a bit reformed yet, eh?"

"I believe I do come over here, always with an extra stock of bile, after six months of the fog and beer of my native land," replied Fred.

"By the way, my dear Fred—your sister, how is she?"

"She's here in Paris."

"You don't say so; now I am delighted," cried Fenton.

And he looked so extremely pleasant, that Lorimer could have wished that he had been less so.

"I'm sure she'll be devilish glad to see you," replied Fred; "for you are tremendous allies."

"I hope so," said Fenton. "Now let me shew you your rooms," and he conducted his guests to two exquisite bed chambers.

"They communicate with one another, you see," said Fenton.

"So much the better; if I have the nightmare I can call up Littlegood," said Fred.

When they were alone, Fred let Lorimer into his friend's

real character; describing him as one of the best, cleverest, and most manly fellows in the world.

“As for my sister,” said Fred; “I believe she thinks there’s no man to compare with him in the world”—at which Mr. Lorimer Littlegood felt scarcely delighted, and detected himself blushing—though surely it was no business of his, and merely another good proof of the excellent taste of Miss Ellen Stanley.

Still it is a remarkable fact, that when left entirely alone in his chamber, Lorimer sat down and remained in a state of complete abstraction for at least an hour, never attempting to open Mr. Bosher’s packet which lay before him. Rousing himself, at length, after his unsatisfactory reverie he broke the seals to learn his fate.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. FALCON'S GUARDIANSHIP TERMINATES SUDDENLY.

FROM the time when Mr. Falcon's guardianship of Dick Bennoch commenced, affairs went very differently in the establishment of Mrs. Bennoch. Pretending to treat her with all deference, and almost to wait for his advice to be asked before giving it, the attorney in reality became complete master of the household. With all her natural keenness, Mrs. Bennoch never imagined evil of Falcon, never detected the bad expression of his countenance, never suspected that he had interested motives in the attention he bestowed on all that concerned herself and her children. This is not surprising, however; if Falcon had been one of her own class she would have been on her guard, but it never struck her as possible that the rich gentleman whose house was far more elegant than hers, and who drove such fine horses, and kept such gay company, could be actuated by anything but kindness in the assistance he afforded her. People are very apt to forget that the same passions are at work in the breasts of the very highest and the very lowest in the social scale. A monarch may feel envy, hatred, and malice, or love, friendship, and charity, equally with the poor artizan. Nay, there is one vice more common among the higher classes than the lower; and that was the very last that Mrs. Bennoch would have suspected to be lurking in the bosom of Mr. Falcon. Yet, if she had seen the look that the *roué* lawyer occasionally cast on her darling Rose when no others were present, she might have trembled for the sake of the child, whom she truly loved more than life itself. Young

as she still was, the girl herself, with true feminine instinct, was conscious of something wrong, and could not but shrink from her admirer ; though he was most kind, attentive, and conciliating in his manner to her, and if he could but have masked the expression of his features as well as he did the feelings of his heart, she might have thought him as charming as her mother did. Indeed she never dissented from the praises bestowed on him by her parent. How could she ? She could not point to a single act of his which was not stamped with kindness and consideration.

Gradually, the young girl began to take herself to task, and demand seriously of her own heart whether she had any right to feel otherwise, than most warmly and gratefully inclined to this new friend,—whether she was not guilty of ingratitude, in even avoiding his presence as she often found means of doing—whether it was not wicked to judge him by mere looks. How could he help them ? had not God given them ?

No, Rose, no ! God has given us the features ; we have ourselves made the expression. True, crime does not always proclaim itself in the countenance while dwelling in the heart, but that is from the care and vigilance with which some men lock it up in the innermost chamber ; yet even then it will occasionally look out of the window, and though we catch but a passing glimpse of it we know that it is there, ready for action in the hour of darkness.

Strange were the contests of good and ill in the heart of this very girl. With warm and generous impulses, quick sense of gratitude, and even much disposition to truly religious sentiments, there were mingled distrust, and cunning, and a certain wilfulness—a desire to do what she ought not, *because* it was forbidden—which were doubtless the fruits of her former wretchedness and neglected condition. Her character still depended on future circumstances, and no one, who could not foresee what these would be, could have predicted whether the good or the evil would eventually triumph.

Mr. Falcon's guardianship of Master Richard Bennoch was not destined to last so long as might have been expected.

Dick was amazingly fond of his "governor," as he now called him. At his own request he was no longer sent to boarding-school, but to one of those excellent public seminaries in London, where four or five hundred boys learn to be scholars within the walls, and blackguards out of them. A different result could scarcely be expected, for once released from the school-room, they are under the guardianship of no one, but are free to do just what they like, to follow their own propensities. We know very well what Master Bennoch's propensities were, and he found plenty of disciples: for vice is nearly always more attractive to boys than good conduct. At all events Dick was well known at one or two of the public houses near his new school, and soon managed to "establish a tick," as he called it, at some of them. Mr. Falcon gave him plenty of pocket money, much more than he knew to be good for him, but the worthy gentleman's plan of action was to thwart the boy in nothing, so as to make him feel so completely grateful, that he would be able to refuse *him* nothing in return, when the right moment for asking a favor should arrive.

And in the meantime the lawyer watched with his sharp, keen, cruel eye, the daily development of Rose's beauties. Though a year younger than her brother, she seemed to be two or three years older; and though still a child, her person was gradually assuming the graces and the form of a young woman. How the attorney chuckled as he thought of the two prizes he had secured for himself, and gloated over the ruin he was plotting for brother and sister!

Mrs. Bennoch was one afternoon sitting in the drawing-room, and mending stockings, an occupation which the good woman, far from regarding as hard work, considered a light, pleasant pastime. Rose was practising a song at the piano, and Master Dick, whose half-holiday it was, was rolling on the floor, and tormenting a cat almost to madness.

Suddenly a tremendous knock resounded on the hall door. Dick jumped up, and ran to the window.

"Here's the governor!" he cried: "he's got a new horse; my! what a stunner! just look!"

Mrs Bennoch did step to the window and look, while Rose began to glide out the room.

"Where are you going, dear?" cried her mother, "it don't look well, Rose, to run away just when Mr. Falcon is coming."

"I'll come back directly," answered Rose, and she left the room.

"She's only gone to make herself smart," said Dick, giggling, "that's all girls think of. How are you, governor?" he cried quite familiarly, as Falcon entered the room.

But Mr. Falcon was too polite to notice the boy before his mother, to whom his manner was always most deferential.

"We were admiring your horse," said Mrs. Bennoch.

"He *is* handsome, is he not?" said Falcon.

"He's a stunner!" exclaimed Dick; "you must have paid an out-and-out sum for him."

Falcon smiled.

"But where is your daughter?" he asked.

"Gone to make herself beautiful," said Dick.

"Nonsense, Dick," remonstrated his mother; "I'm sure Rose isn't a bit vain. She will be here directly, sir."

Mrs. Bennoch always called Falcon "sir;" there is nothing that under-bred people take such a long while to get rid of as "sir," "ma'am," and "miss."

The conversation, which in spite of Falcon's tact, was never very brisk between himself and Mrs. Bennoch, was beginning to flag when Rose entered the room.

Her color was rather heightened, as it always was when Falcon looked at her or addressed her; but whether from pleasure is another matter.

"She's looking most charming," said the lawyer, turning to her mother. Dick managed to slip out of the room.

"I came, Mrs. Bennoch, to tell you I have an opera box at Covent Garden to-night, and as I know how fond your daughter is of music I hope you will honor me by coming to it."

"I'm sure we shall be most happy ; shan't we, Rose?"

Rose was obliged to assent ; but though truly fond of music she would much rather have staid away from Mr. Falcon's box. Falcon then went on telling them of the opera that was to be performed, and the singers that were to appear in it.

But let us follow master Dick. As soon as he left the drawing-room, that young gentleman slipped down stairs, put on his cap, and went outside, where Job Peck was standing at the head of Mr. Falcon's new horse, a magnificent thorough-bred bay, harnessed to a dog-cart.

Job touched his hat, as in duty bound, to his master's ward.

"He's a fine un, eh?" said Dick.

"A reg'lar beauty, sir," answered Job.

"I'm going to drive him a bit," continued Dick.

"You!" exclaimed Job, "excuse me, sir, but I couldn't allow it."

"Who the devil wants your allowance?" cried Dick.
"Your master told me to come, and have a drive."

"Then, perhaps, he meant I was to drive you," said Job.

"No, he didn't ; do you think I'd let a groom drive me?"

"Excuse me, sir, but I couldn't let you get up unless I had master's orders from his own lips."

"Why, you ragmuffin," cried Dick, who began to have a tremendous sense of his own importance, "do you expect your master to take the trouble of coming down stairs to tell you himself?"

"He might just speak to me out of the window," answered Job.

"Very likely—and my mother half-dead with the toothache. *He* won't open the window. Come, I tell you what—just run

in and ask yourself whether I haven't got leave, and I'll stand by the horse's head till you come back."

This proposition seemed reasonable; so Job assented to it. Dick took his place at the horse's head, and Job run up the steps of the house and rung the bell. But as he did so, Dick seized the reins and sprung up with the activity of a monkey into the driving seat.

The suddenness of his movement made the spirited horse bound forward, so that Dick was almost unseated at first start; but he recovered himself in a moment. Job, perceiving the trick and fearing the danger, run after the dog-cart, on which Dick dealt the gallant bay a smart cut with the whip. Unused to such treatment, the horse dashed forward at a furious pace, but just as he whirled around the corner of the street, Job Peck managed to seize the back foot-board, and swing himself up on to it.

"For God's sake, give me the reins, you young villain!" he cried.

"Go to——," where was not heard amid the clatter of wheels over the paved streets.

It is wonderful how Dick managed to guide the animal at all, unused as he was to driving, but somehow they passed along unharmed, though frightening plenty of people on their way.

Job now saw that something serious would happen. It was doubtful whether he could prevent it even had he the reins, for the horse was clearly running away at full speed, and cared nothing for the bit. Twice did the wheels strike against a passing carriage with force enough to send both vehicles spinning in opposite directions, but not so as to make the wheels lock within one another. More than one person had been knocked down; every one was shouting, and fear and consternation were on all sides. Yet they even managed to get clear of London streets, and dashed along one of the least frequented roads in the southern suburbs. On one side of them was an open country —no vehicle was seen on the road ahead of them; but Job's

quick eye remarked that they were nearing a house where the road took a sharp turn to the left. If they could get round that corner in safety, there was yet hope. They near it—they reach it—madly the horse whirls them round it—there is a terrific crash—a scream of agony and fear—two bodies seem to fly into the air—the dog-cart is smashed to atoms, and the horse rushing on with the broken shafts at his sides.

“This one’s done for!” said some one among a crowd of grooms and ostlers, and other folks, assembled outside the “Red Lion” Inn where the accident had occurred. He was examining the body of poor Dick Bennoch.

“Here’s the other,” cried some one else: “I don’t think he’s dead.”

They were carried into the inn, and a surgeon was soon on the spot. Job Peck’s arm was broken; but poor Dick was really dead!

Job Peck came to his senses within ten minutes, and was enabled to tell the bystanders where he and Dick should be conveyed. He was terribly shocked when he heard that the poor lad was actually dead, and could scarcely believe it; yet when he saw the corpse he could have little idea that a human body so fearfully mangled could still be living.

We need not tell of poor Mrs. Bennoch’s grief and shock, of Rose’s tears, and Falcon’s condolences. Not that Rose could have loved her brother much, for he had given little cause to any one to feel affection for him. But still, the horror of the sudden death, and the genuine grief of her mother, affected the young girl deeply.

And Falcon too, lamented. For had he not lost his ward? had he not—ah! a new thought struck him—Rose was now an heiress!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CONFESSiON AND SYMPATHY.

IT is a long time since we paid a visit to the quiet little cottage where Jessie Littlegood and her mother resided. Certainly it is a quiet out-of-the-way place, and there may be much sameness in the life of its inhabitants ; but we venture to opine that Miss Jessie Littlegood is at least as well worth looking after as any of the folks in whose company we have lately passed our time. But this is the way of the world : the noisy ones, who are eternally thrusting themselves into notice, and forcing you to attend to them and their deeds, meet with ten times as much respect as the modest and retiring, though the real worth, the real talent, or the real beauty will quite as often chance to be with the latter. If Jessie had assumed the airs of a distressed heroine when the lawsuit robbed them of their property, people would have considered her one ; and half the country would have come to pour forth their condolence into her ears, and perhaps even a little of their superfluous wealth into her purse. But because she was really a heroine, bore sorrow in silence, and labored with a good heart to *make* the good times which never come of their own accord, people took little notice of her, and though admitting her to be an " estimable young person," would have been quite astonished if you had told them that she was heroic.

When will the world understand what heroism is ? When will the false glitter of glory, the noisy trumpet of fame, the loud mob-oratory of patriotism, be all appreciated at their true worth ? and the silent endurance, the lonely labor to do good

without reward and without renown, wear the laurels of true heroism? Never! For while the earth endures, men will prefer greatness to goodness, power to wisdom, glory to truth. And even were it otherwise, the loud proclaimed honors of heroism would only distress and hurt the humble doers of good for good's sake.

Of all mortals who work for their daily bread, those whom we most pity are teachers. It is all very well for people sitting in their arm-chairs to talk about the high calling of those who instruct youth, the noble rewards of seeing the progress of their charges in knowledge and virtue, and so forth. But did one of these people, who talk so glibly on the subject, ever teach a child the alphabet? If not, we strongly recommend them to catch some very young lady or gentleman who has not yet acquired that elementary branch of education, and begin the task. If they don't find one hour of such work about the hardest they ever performed, the most wearying, the most trying to the temper and patience, and apparently the most utterly fruitless,—then we are greatly mistaken as to the powers of human endurance. What then must it be to teach twenty pupils, very young, mostly very stupid, often very ill-tempered, and never very attentive? As for the rewards, it is utterly absurd to talk of such things; and the chances are, that just as the poor teacher finds his or her little pupil emerging from the simple rudiments which it has cost so much weary labor to instil, the child is removed for some paternal caprice, perhaps, because it had been seen crying when it came home, or because, being a little dunce, it has not got on so well as Mrs. Jones's little girl who has three times as much brains,—or else to be placed in a finishing establishment, where eight different professors attend daily, and get all the credit due to the first care of the poor preparatory school master or mistress.

As for the anxiety, nothing can be greater than that of a truly conscientious teacher; and to add to all other discomforts, he or she has to please forty mammas and papas for every

twenty pupils. Forty masters and mistresses to serve—in fact, with forty different educational theories of their own! Because education is a subject on which every one, from Lord John Russell (who has half-a-dozen all himself) down to a ploughman, has a theory. People who have never learnt to read or write have quite as decided opinions as to what their children ought, or ought not, to be taught, as the best educated people in the world. We have met men who say, and maintain, and argue, that “the people” ought not to be educated at all; but we never met a man who confessed that he knew nothing at all about the question. In fact, every Englishman thinks himself a judge of horseflesh and education.

Jessie was good-tempered, patient, and gentle. Woe to the pupils when the teacher is not all three! and woe to the teacher, also, whose body and mind will soon be worn out by the constant fretting and friction of irritated nerves.

Her pupils were of all ages, from five to twelve or thirteen years of age, and had she not been as methodical as she was sweet-tempered, she could never have managed them all. The only assistance her mother rendered her, besides keeping one or two of the youngest to their tasks, was to be present in the school-room, and see that every one was attentive. And yet, strange to say, nearly all the parents were satisfied; nearly all the children got well through their tasks; and all of them but one or two loved Jessie as dearly as their own mothers.

But at night, when the work of the day, and the preparation for that of the morrow, was all over, it must be owned that the poor girl often felt sadly weary. Those who labor only with the hands, or only at some half-mechanical employment—mere daily counting-house and office work—can have little idea of the brain-weariness which affects those whose powers of reflection, memory, and invention are called into constant action, and at times forced almost beyond their powers. It is a prostration of the nervous powers, a kind of stupefaction, which sleep or alcohol can alone relieve. But I strongly advise none

to try the latter who would not gradually convert the temporary pain into a lasting disease.

Jessie's greatest pleasure was to hear from her brother; as to whose future she was still most anxious.

One Saturday afternoon—a half-holiday—she and her mother were sitting in their little drawing-room, with the French windows leading to the lawn wide open.

"I wonder what will be the result of Lorimer's visit to France, Jessie," said the mother. "Do you know I sometimes feel as if we should get back the property?"

"I cannot say that I do, dear," replied Jessie; "but you know I am silly enough to think it better not to buoy ourselves up with hopes at all. We have found that it is possible to live without it; why repine for the money then?"

"But see how hard you have to work, my dear girl!"

"I don't complain," answered Jessie.

"No; that's true, my dear," said her mother; "but I'm afraid you look very thin."

"I've always heard Lorimer say that a fat horse cannot work; so I hope I am only in good working condition," replied Jessie, laughing. "But about Lorimer's visit to France. I dare say he will find Mr. Bosher; but I don't think he will extract much information out of him. If he does, I fully expect it will turn out that this property was wrongfully acquired by my grandfather and himself: he's a bad man, I am sure."

"Who's that coming in at the gate?" asked the old lady.

"Ah! it's the postman; a letter from Lorimer, I'm sure," and she ran out through the window, and met the postman. It was Lorimer's handwriting, and the Paris postmark that met her eye.

"Come, and read it to me, dear," cried her mother from the open window, for Jessie was already engaged breaking the seal.

"Yes, yes," she answered, and was immediately in the drawing-room again.

"MY DEAREST JESSIE—*Me voila!* But stay: first and fore-

most, let me tell you that we have no more hope of the property——”

“Why?” cried Mrs. Littlegood, interrupting.

“Stay, my dear mamma; let me read on.”

“By the enclosed copy of Bosher’s letter to myself, you will see (though I don’t believe *all* he says) that my grandfather was never rightfully entitled to it; *ergo*, we, his descendants, can have no claim to it. Still, I very much doubt whether the present possessors have much more right in law. The man Bennoch, who is since dead, was most likely illegitimate, and the certificate of his father’s marriage, a clever forgery of a little rascal named Weazel, whom, by-the-bye, I shall look after when I return to London. However, there is no need why we should disturb the present owners, when we cannot instal ourself in their places——”

“I don’t see that,” cried Mrs. Littlegood. “Lorimer was very kind to that girl, and she ought to be forced to settle something on him.”

“I am quite sure that Lorimer would never accept it,” answered Jessie; “but let me read on.”

“So there, my dear Jessie, is an end of *that* matter, as far as we are concerned. Now for my trip. I met on board the Folkestone packet my friends the Stanleys—Mrs. and Miss Stanley, and her brother Fred. I think I’ve often mentioned them to you before. (Jessie smiled as she read this.) Fred is a very good fellow; most good-tempered, amusing, and eccentric. The mamma is a great favorite of mine, and seems so thoroughly convinced of my innocence in that abominable affair of Lavers, and so anxious to show me that I stand in her good graces as highly as ever, that I quite love her. As for her daughter (here Jessie’s eyes brightened), I think I told you that she is one of the nicest girls I know. On arriving at Boulogne (no more about Ellen! thought Jessie), they begged me to come to the same hotel with them; and after I had discovered Bosher, in consequence of his extracting a promise from

me that I would not read his 'confession' till I had gone to London or Paris, I was persuaded to accompany them here. Mamma and daughter have gone to stay with a Mrs. Byerly Thomson, and Fred and I with a Mr. Fenton, a friend of Fred's. This same Jack Fenton is a character. Picture to yourself a very pretty lady-like little man, yet with the tastes of a gentleman, the courage and strength almost of a lion, well-read, easy-mannered, and altogether the most fascinating companion I ever met. He received us with the greatest kindness, and has insisted on my staying with him. The day after our arrival, we all three went to call on Mrs. Byerly Thomson and her two guests. Miss Stanley's warm reception of Jack Fenton proves her high estimation of him, and indeed her brother tells me she thinks there is no one in the world to compare with him——”

“What are the tears in your eyes for, Jessie?” asked her mother here.

“Nothing,” answered Jessie, “my eyes are rather weak, perhaps;” but to herself she said, “Poor Lorimer! I fear that *this* time his heart is touched; and now it must be wounded, too.”

“In short, though they are both too well bred to neglect others, they really conversed much more with one another than with any one else. Mrs. Thomson I have met in London. She is one of your gay, rattling women, whose tongues are never tired of talking, nor their feet of dancing. The only thing that could make her unhappy would be to condemn her to silence or stillness; her purgatory will surely be, to be tongue-tied and fastened to her chair in a ball-room where the best-dressed people are whirling on all sides of her to the best of music. She booked us on the spot for more balls than I can remember, and I only put my faith in Fred, who will be duly instructed by his sister, to enable me to keep my engagements. After leaving the house, we went to examine Jack Fenton's stud, for he keeps no less than eight horses here, and is very

rich. By-the-way, I don't yet know why he lives in Paris, but certainly if I had his rooms, I should be loth to quit them, for they are exquisite——”

“I don't like this man,” cried Jessie.

“Why not, my dear?” asked her mother; “I'm sure Lorimer speaks of him in the highest terms.”

Jessie made no reply, but read on:—

“As this is my first day in Paris, I have little more to tell you. I don't intend to stay here long; indeed, I must think seriously of what I am to do next. Besides this, if you intend to read all Bosher's last dying speech and confession, as Fred calls it, you will have enough to do without a longer letter from me.” And the letter concluded with affectionate messages to his mother.

But there was a postscript, and Jessie saw that it was marked, “*Read this alone.*”

“Alas! my dear Jessie, I wish I had never come this fatal journey! I doubt whether I am heart-whole *now*, and yet *there*—I can see there is no hope for your poor brother.”

And many a tear did Jessie shed that night for her dear Lorimer.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A DEPARTURE AND AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.

MOTHER SHADDLES was not a prepossessing old lady in personal appearance. She had one leg shorter than the other, which did not improve her style of locomotion; a pair of sunken, red-rimmed, yet sharp and cunning-looking eyes; a brown, withered skin; a nose like a beak; scanty yellow-grey hair, quite unacquainted with brush or comb; long, scraggy arms, always bare to the elbows; and a mouth which, when she laughed—as she did often most unpleasantly—displayed a set of fangs indescribably ugly and disagreeable. Our private opinion is that they did not close over or against one another, but that the top ones fitted in between the bottom ones, and *vice versa*. Such was the personal appearance of Mr. Weazel's present domestic attendant. We have already stated that she was deaf; but she was not quite so much so as she wished people to believe.

What she did all day long it would not be easy to say, though she was always halting about the house as if extremely busy; but as Weazel's abode was very dirty, his kitchen arrangements on the most confined scale, and the personal attendance required by him not worth mentioning, Mother Shaddles must have possessed the art of appearing very active in the midst of idleness.

Weazel had been very busy one morning—a day or two after Mr. Falcon's visit to him—turning over papers in his desk, making memoranda, writing letters, and at times sitting absorbed in thought—not less busy then, perhaps, than when

his hands were moving. Mother Shaddles was hobbling about the room, fumbling at the crockery on the shelf, dusting a chair, stirring the fire, and so forth, but always finding some excuse for being in the room where her master was sitting ; and very often Mother Shaddles might have been seen peeping over Weazel's shoulder while he was quite unconscious of it. At length, however, he turned sharply round while she was doing so.

“ What the devil do you want, you old hag ? ” he roared.

“ There's a power of dust on that table,” croaked the old woman, not the least disconcerted, “ mayn't I dust it off ? ”

“ Go and be hanged ! ” was the courteous reply, while Mother Shaddles hobbled away chuckling to herself ; the good lady was enjoying the innocent pleasure of picturing to her mind's eye her master in the state of “ suspense ” to which his words consigned *her* ; for Mother Shaddles was convinced of nothing more certainly than that Weazel would one day be hanged.

“ If the old beldame could read, I should be afraid of her,” muttered Weazel, “ but she's as ignorant as she's deaf.”

So he continued in his reverie, and Mother Shaddles slunk out of the room. The moment afterwards the door-bell rang. Weazel listened for the old woman to go to the door, but heard no sound of her.

“ Don't you hear the bell ? ” he bawled out.

No reply ; and the bell rang violently again.

In a passion he jumped up and ran into the back kitchen, but the old woman was not there (Weazel, by the way, was sitting as usual in the front kitchen) ; so, concluding that she had gone out or was at the top of the house, he went up-stairs to open the street door himself. While he was doing so, Mother Shaddles glided out of a closet in the back kitchen, hobbled with wonderful quickness, and with almost noiseless step into the front room, ran up to Weazel's desk, opened one end of it, seized a paper, glanced at it for a moment, thrust it into her pocket, and glided back to her closet.

Meanwhile Weazel had opened the street door and found no one ; so cursing the perpetrator of a “run-away ring,” he returned to his desk. This he immediately closed and locked, and putting the key in his pocket, and taking up his hat, he prepared to go out. On the staircase he met Mother Shaddles descending, and looking just as usual.

“Don’t go out of the place till I come back ; do you hear ?”

“Ay, ay, I hear,” muttered the old woman, and Weazel left the house.

Mother Shaddles, as soon as she was alone, went again to the desk. It was a small leather hand or travelling desk, with a first-rate Brahmah’s lock, for Weazel, though a miser, was not fool enough to trust his papers to a common cheap affair, for the sake of saving a few shillings.

“Locked, locked tight enough,” growled the old woman. “No matter ; not much use to lock up the stable after the horse is stolen, ha ! ha ! I’ll hang him ; I’ll hang him ! God bless us all ! I’ll hang him.”

And so saying, Mother Shaddles laughed as if enjoying a capital joke, and looked more horrible than the best got-up witch we ever saw in Macbeth.

“It worn’t a bad dodge of mine to ring the bell, and make him go to answer it, ho ! ho ! leave Poll Shaddles alone for a dodge ! And he thinks I can’t read, ha ! ha ! And he thinks I can’t hear, ha ! ha ! though maybe I *am* a little hard of hearing I can hear well enough to know he’s a rogue, and see it too though my eyes isn’t as good as they used to be. God bless us all ! I’ll see him hanged.”

The old crone went on talking to herself in this strain, and chuckling all the afternoon ; but still she hobbled about the house and appeared to be very busy, though as usual she did nothing.

When Weazel left the house, he walked a long distance till he came to quite a different part of the town from that in which he resided. He had got into the neighborhood of furniture

brokers and dealers in second-hand everythings, a rusty neighborhood, which smelt mouldy, and seemed as if it never could have been a new neighborhood. It was impossible to imagine that those dirty, smoke-stained bricks had ever been fresh-looking; that the paint on the door posts had ever been bright, the windows ever clean, the floors ever free from grease and dirt, the stones of the door steps ever white. Just as easy to fancy that the rusty, dingy coat of that old man in the warehouse there had ever been a bran new, shining piece of cloth, that his tortoise-shell spectacles had ever lain in an optician's tray, among choice specimens of workmanship; that the man himself had even been a child, or even had took off the greasy little skullcap that clung to his head as if it were glued there, or rather as if it was the natural covering provided by nature for his pericranium.

"Well, Mr. Maple, how are *you* getting on?" cried Weazel, addressing this individual in his blandest tones.

"How are you, Mr. Weazel?" was the reply, uttered in a quiet demure voice, in keeping with the staid, mouldy look of everything about the man.

"How's business?" asked Weazel.

"The same as usual, mine never changes for better or worse," replied Maple.

"You're a lucky fellow, for you've got a capital good business, I know that. I wish I were your partner."

"Do you?" said Maple; but without the least smile, or, indeed, excitement of any kind.

"You don't seem to be as full here as you generally are," remarked Weazel, looking about the warehouse in which they were standing.

"About the same as usual," was the reply.

"I suppose you don't care to do a little business to-day, do you?" asked Weazel.

"I always care to do business," answered Maple, "why should I not?"

"Well, can we step into your back room?" said the other.

"Of course we can," was the answer. "Tom, keep watch, and call me if I am wanted." This was addressed to a boy who had been rolled up in some mysterious corner, but who sprung through the basin-hole of a washhand-stand as soon as his name was called, and came and sat on a second-hand iron safe in front of the warehouse, eyeing every passer-by as if he must be a thief looking out to steal Maple's chairs and tables.

Into the dingy little back room, dingier and more mouldy, and of course less airy, than the warehouse, Mr. Maple led Mr. Weazel.

"Can we have a glass of brandy-and-water?" suggested Weazel.

"Of course we can," replied Maple, and he rang a bell, and a servant girl, who though equally dirty with everything else about the place, was not, however, mouldy-looking, made her appearance.

"Mr. Weazel wishes you to fetch him some brandy," said Maple.

Weazel, thus appealed to, handed over half-a-crown and ordered half-a-pint of pale brandy, and some water and tumblers. It was soon fetched, though it had stood a great chance of being upset, for Mary never passed Tom without pulling his ear, and Tom in return always tried to catch Mary round the waist, and all these proceedings endangered the safety of the brandy.

"Now," began Weazel, "I know of a very decent lot of furniture for sale, if you're inclined to bid for it."

"Of course I'm inclined to bid for it," said Maple.

"Well," continued Weazel, "you must be ready to pay cash for it."

"I'm always ready to pay cash," answered Maple.

"And you must give a liberal price," said Weazel.

"I always give a *fair* price," was the reply.

"The fact is," continued Weazel, "you know *my* furniture pretty well, I think, don't you?"

"Pretty well."

"Then it's not bad, is it?" he asked.

"It's not bad—it's not good—you bought it too cheap," said Maple.

"Now, what would you give for it?" inquired Weazel.

"I cannot say what I would give for it," replied Maple, "because I never answer such a question put in such a manner—it's not business."

"Well, then," said Weazel, provoked at his slowness, "is *this* business? I wan't to leave London this very evening. I have most important engagements in the North; I may be detained a long while; I don't choose to leave my furniture to the mercy of that confounded old woman of mine, so I want to sell it. Will you buy it? and what will you give me for it?"

"Yes, that is business. I will give you sixty-five pounds for it," answered Maple, deliberately.

"Sixty-five pounds! it's worth a hundred and fifty at least."

"Then go and sell it to some one who thinks so too," answered Maple, quite unmoved.

"Come, say a hundred," suggested Weazel.

"Sixty-five," repeated Maple, "no more."

"I can't part with it for that, from my soul, I can't," said Weazel.

"*Don't*, then," was the answer.

"But," cried Weazel, in his most insinuating tones, "you'll give a little more than you say, won't you?"

"I never give more than I say," replied Maple.

Weazel inwardly anathematized the man's obstinacy, but he wanted to get rid of his things, and he wanted the money. So after a little further show of hesitation, he agreed to accept the price offered, and he and Maple walked together straight to the abode of the former.

On reaching there Weazel sent old Mother Shaddles on an errand, which would take her at least two hours to execute. He then signed the necessary documents, transferring every-

thing in the house except his personal apparel, and his desk, to Mr. Maple, who handed him the sum of sixty-five pounds.

"Shall you remain here?" asked Weazel.

"Yes, till my man arrives to take possession of the goods. He'll be here in less than an hour."

"I'll just get a cab then and start, as I'm rather pressed for time," said Weazel; and he went out of the house, and soon procured one. Taking his solitary trunk, with the desk safely stowed inside it, he got into the cab, said farewell to his friend, and drove to the Great Northern Railway station.

Weazel had forsaken his household gods!

In due time Mrs. Shaddles returned to the house, just in time to see the last of her dear master's things placed in the furniture van.

"Holloa! what's this?" asked the old woman.

"We're a-taking away the furnitur'," replied the man she addressed.

"But who's got a right to do it? It's my master's."

"No it aint, it's *my* master's, now he's bought it. Yourn's gone away an hour ago," said the man.

"Gone away! sold his furnitur'! never paid me my wages—the wicked, dirty, cheating, little villain!" cried Mother Shaddles, in a rage.

She entered the house; it was empty. Not a solitary thing was left, and the man began to put up the shutters.

"Now, old lady," said he, "you must turn out, if you please: my orders is to lock the house up, and take the key to my master."

Mother Shaddles looked at him—and looked so viciously, too, that the man was half alarmed. Had he lived in the days of his great grandfather, he would infallibly have thought her a witch. However, she made him no reply, but left the house, which he locked up, and then went his way.

And Mother Shaddles went *her* way, and as she hobbled

along, she enjoyed many a chuckle, and often rubbed her hands, and said :

“ Oh, the little villain ! Ho ! ho ! God bless us all ! I’ll see him hanged !* I’ll see him hanged !”

Meanwhile the individual towards whom she entertained these benevolent feelings, was spinning along at thirty miles an hour, in a second class carriage, towards the North. He did not, however, go very far.

Alighting at the station where he had determined to remain for a time, he was directed to the nearest inn, and was soon within its hospitable walls.

“ What’ll you please to take, sir ?” asked the waiter.

“ Let me have a nice rump steak, waiter, and a potato, as soon as you can, for I’m hungry,” said Weazel.

“ Yes, sir,—and a room, sir ?”

“ Yes—a room—I’ll sleep here.”

And a capital dinner did Weazel eat, and much did he enjoy his glass of punch afterwards, and greatly did he congratulate himself on his cleverness in running away, instead of paying the thousand pounds to Mr. Falcon.

“ A likely story, indeed !” said Weazel to himself. “ He has the whip-hand of me, and so I ran away. But I’ll bide my time, and I’ll have the whip-hand of *him*, and then we’ll see whether I know how to play my cards or not. A thousand pounds indeed ! Ha ! ha !”

Weazel indulged in a second glass of punch before he went to bed that night, and smoked a pipe, and got himself into quite a pleasant and jovial frame of mind, so that he even said something complimentary to a very ugly chambermaid who showed him his room.

And now Mr. Weazel unpacked his portmanteau, and took out his leather writing-desk.

“ I wonder what I’d part with that for,” said he, contemplating it. “ Not for a good round sum, I fancy.” And then he took the key and unlocked it : and then he turned over the

notes that were in it, and the papers, and grinned with delight : but suddenly he turned them over fast—faster—faster—scattered them—bank-notes and all, about the floor—faster—faster—and his check blanched and his eyes glared—it's not there, what he seeks for—not there !

A loud cry—more like that of a wounded wild-beast than of a human being—rings through the house, and the terror-struck man falls senseless on the floor !

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ROSE ASTONISHES A LAWYER.

“WHAT good has ever come of our riches, I should like to know?” said, or rather thought, Mrs. Bennoch to herself, on the day that saw poor Dick’s remains conveyed to the same grave which already held his father’s. “What good has ever come of them. The old man dead,—rest his soul!—I did not mourn for him as I ought, I’m afraid: but he *had* tried my feelings very hard, and my heart is not as soft as it used to be. And now my poor boy! There’s only one thing left for me to love now—only one, but”—and she fell into a reverie about Rose, and thought how inexpressibly dearer to her than all the world beside the girl had ever been.

“She ain’t happy, though; that she ain’t. I don’t mean just now, when her poor brother’s just dead, but *never*: I’ve watched and watched her every day, and I’m sure she don’t feel real happiness. I wouldn’t have liked to see her again in the wretched place we used to be in, it was cruel to a young thing like her: but when Mr. Littlegood had taken charge of her, she wasn’t in want of anything—not even learning. But now—” and Mrs. Bennoch again fell into a reverie.

There was much truth in the poor woman’s thoughts. Indeed love supplied the want of knowledge in her, whenever she sought to understand the workings of her dear daughter’s heart. Rose was very far from happy; how could she be otherwise? She was in a false position; an heiress without friends or connexions; an educated girl and the daughter of a perfectly ignorant woman; the school companion of young

ladies of high birth, not one of whom would have visited her own mother.

And she had a still greater source of disquietude. She felt—felt every hour of her life—that the comforts and luxuries they now enjoyed, had been robbed from her own kind, generous benefactor. It was strange to watch how the feelings of devotion to Lorimer in the heart of this young girl, only increased with her maturing years. But it was cherished more secretly than before; no longer would she speak of him to any one; no longer would she even mention his name to her mother, or pursue for one instant the conversation that the latter often tried to commence about him. So carefully did she avoid all allusion to him, that her mother at length began to fancy that Rose really was forgetting the existence of such a person; and perhaps the good woman was occasionally grieved as the bare suspicion crossed her mind, that her dear girl could be ungrateful to her preserver. And this while the heart she distrusted was brooding over thoughts connected with him alone! How mistakenly do we judge one another!

There was another individual who indulged in many reveries at this time—our friend Mr. Falcon.

That worthy and well-dressed attorney had a most practical way of looking at every event falling under his immediate notice; first, did it concern him at all? secondly, how would it affect his interests? thirdly, could he turn it to any good account?

He soon decided that Dick Bennoch's death concerned him very closely: that it affected his interests by putting an end to his guardianship, which promised him pretty pickings; and, lastly, that he might, nevertheless, turn the unlucky accident to excellent account, and put much money in his pocket in consequence of it.

For was not Rose now the heiress? Had she not the certainty of two thousand and some odd hundreds a year on coming of age—or marriage? He was not a bad-looking fellow, as

he well knew ; he was not old ; but there was something he prided himself on much more than his good looks, and that was his cleverness. Never had he met a man yet whom he could not overmatch, and he had no doubt that he should be equally successful in bending any woman to his will. Yet he confessed to himself that Rose was an awkward customer, in spite of her sex, and her extreme youth. Whether the girl were stupid, or bashful, or obstinate, or vain of her new position, he could not quite decide ; but he was clear-sighted enough to perceive, and sensible enough to confess it to himself, that his efforts to make himself agreeable to her appeared, hitherto, to have failed completely. What object he had had in making the attempt up to this period, he could scarcely say ; at all events, with all his sensuality, he would not have liked to analyze his feelings on the point. But now his course was clear. The girl was friendless ; she had a fortune ; she was nearly marriageable ; the game before him was almost too easy to require his ordinary skill in playing it ; almost too easy, but for that taciturnity, indifference, dislike, or whatever the feeling was which he saw in her, and inwardly cursed.

It was not many days after Dick's funeral, that Falcon was seated in the drawing-room of Mrs. Bennoch's house alone with Rose, whose mother was not at home. The young girl was constrained, and almost awkward, as she was always in the lawyer's presence. At the same time, she looked as if on her guard against some trap ; or, perhaps, as if watching an opportunity to lay a trap herself—a strange mixture of fear and cunning.

"Are you not very fond of drawing, then ?" asked Falcon.

"No."

"Nor of music ?"

"I like to listen to it, but not to play myself," she answered.

"Does that arise from bashfulness, or idleness ?" asked Falcon, smiling.

"Not from idleness, but I can't please myself sufficiently," she replied.

"So much the better, because that will make you strive more to acquire greater skill."

"I shall never have sufficient to please myself," said Rose.

"But you may please others," rejoined Falcon. "Won't that gratify you?"

"No; not at all."

"What! do you not care to please any one?"

"I think not—perhaps—no!" she answered, hesitating.

"Is there no one in the world you would care to please? think now," he said.

Rose blushed deeply. Falcon observed it, and his piercing eye flashed. What could be the meaning? Could she mean himself? Or of what, or of whom, could she be thinking?

"Ah!" he said, banteringly, "I see there is some one. I wish I knew who it was."

"I did not say there was any one," answered Rose, quite coldly.

"No, but you looked it," said Falcon.

Rose blushed again at this—as people always do when they try not.

"I don't care to please any one much," she said, "except my mother."

Falcon did not believe a word of it. His curiosity was excited; perhaps even a stronger feeling had possession of him; at all events, he determined to find out the young girl's secret, whatever it might be. He went now on another track, as sailors say.

"Well, you will be sure to please now without trying," observed Falcon.

"Why?" she asked quickly.

"Because you are so charming a young lady," said he, half mockingly.

Rose was annoyed.

"You did not mean that; you said I should be sure to please *now*; why do you mean *now*?" and she spake the words almost in a tone of command.

Falcon was amazed. Here was a new view of the girl's character! Hitherto he had seen her half-timid, half-sullen, reserved, humble. Suddenly there was a burst of a spirit he had not expected to be lurking in that tender frame: he admired her much more than before. A very weak man, or a very firm one, always admires a high-spirited woman; common place men dislike or fear one.

"You must not scold me," said he, laughing; and Rose shrank back to her quiet, timid manner again. "I meant that it will not require much exertion on your part to please, now that you are an heiress."

"An heiress! I!" she exclaimed, and she looked at Falcon in unfeigned astonishment.

"My dear Miss Bennoch," said Falcon, surprised in turn, "do you really mean that you don't know that all your father's property (excepting your mother's jointure) is now yours?"

"Mine! really mine!" she exclaimed, for not a word had passed between her mother and herself on the subject, and she had never thought about it; certainly it never had occurred to her that she was now an heiress.

"Certainly—yours," answered Falcon; "whose else should it be?"

"And can I do with it whatever I please?" she asked, her face lighting up with a look of eagerness, which Falcon at once mistook for avarice gratified. The mistake was natural in a man of the world; especially a lawyer; but it was a very great one nevertheless.

"No," he answered, "you cannot do what you please with it *yet*: but you can when you are twenty-one years of age."

"It's a long while to look forward to," said Rose, sighing deeply.

"You may come into possession of it sooner," suggested Falcon.

"How?" she asked eagerly again.

"By marrying; it will be your husband's then; or it may be settled partly on him, and partly on yourself, and so forth."

Rose relapsed into her former timid silent state, but every now and then a deep blush passed over her face. How the man of the world would have opened his flashing eyes if he could have read the varied emotions then agitating the young girl's heart! His keenness was all at fault; he had not even the right clue to the feelings he wanted to understand.

He thought he would try a little *bardinage*, and while pretending to be jesting, to find out a little more of this strange girl's character.

"Now, suppose you had this fortune all to yourself, Miss Bennoch—I mean, all at your own command at this moment; what would you do? Would you take an opera-box, and buy a new carriage?"

Rose shook her head.

"Well, then, would you go to Hunt and Roskells, and buy jewels; and to Howell and James's, and buy silks; and, in short, spend as much of it as you could in the shortest possible space of time—eh?"

Again Rose shook her head.

"Would you marry?"

"No," she said, sharply and decidedly, so much so as quite to startle Falcon again, though he was not easily astonished.

"Then what *would* you do?" said he, with mock solemnity.

"Give it all away," she replied.

"Give it all away! all!—and to whom pray would you so charitably behave?"

"I would give it all back to the rightful owner—the man we have robbed—whom *you* have helped to rob, perhaps,—but he *is* robbed:—the property is his and *he shall have it*."

Her voice was raised, her eye flashed, it almost seemed that

her foot stamped. There was energy, determination, strong will, and bitterness all combined—and she rose quickly from her seat, and left the room.

As for Falcon, he had never been so completely astounded in his life. He sat quite bewildered for at least a couple of minutes, doubting the evidence of his senses.

“ Whew !” he exclaimed at last. “ Sets the wind that way ? Is the girl mad ? or is the child already in love ? And with this Mr. Lorimer Littlegood too ! Truly that young gentleman seems to have bewitched both mother and daughter. The mother wanted to make him guardian of her son, and the daughter wants to throw all she has—and herself too, perhaps—into his arms. This will never do. I’m not going to let this penniless puppy walk off with my prize. He’ll be a clever fellow if he does, now that I am on my guard. There’ll be a little tough work for me, for the girl has the spirit of the devil. Yet after all a downright madly obstinate person is the easiest in the world to manage if you have only the wit to humor him. Unfortunately, it won’t quite do to humor this particular feeling though. My way is not quite clear to me at present ; but I’ll not be long without seeing it. *Aut facian, aut inveniam*, as somebody’s motto says. Mr. Lorimer Littlegood, I am with every respect your most devoted—enemy. You are my game, sir, and I’ll hunt you with every hound I can press into my service. I’ll run you down too, or never trust my skill again. The girl shall be mine—and the money too. Meanwhile I’ll go and call on my clever little imitator of other gentlemen’s writing—my very good friend Mr. Weazel—and trouble him for that little matter of a thousand pounds. The cash will be useful just now. *Allons !*

And humming an air, Mr. Falcon stepped into his cabriolet and drove away.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AN INTRODUCTION.

Who's the man you just spoke to?" asked Fred Stanley of Lorimer Littlegood as they were sauntering on the *boulevards*.

"His name is Hemming; I wonder you don't know him. If you were a tailor you would be sure to do so."

"Why? has he so many tailors?" asked Fred.

"I don't suppose there's one of any pretensions in London who has not Will Hemming's name on his books," answered Lorimer—"to say nothing of every other sort of tradesmen that supply luxuries for the inner or outer man."

"He's rich then, eh?"

"I never met any one who could tell me where he has a six-pence of property," said Lorimer.

"Plays then, I suppose?" suggested Fred.

"No, at least no one ever saw him do so. The fact is he lives on credit—on 'tick' as he calls it."

"Oh, that's all very well; but it can't last for ever, you know," remarked Fred.

"I suppose not," said Lorimer: "but it has lasted Will Hemming up to five-and-thirty; and it lasted a certain greater lion that we both know of to a much longer period."

"Do you mean to say he's never *dunned*?" asked Fred.

"On the contrary, I should say he's *always* being dunned," answered Lorimer. "But he has the most extraordinary way of putting men off, cajoling them, laughing at them, and even bullying them—and it always ends in their leaving him alone."

"And giving him fresh credit?" asked the other.

"Yes; actually, yes. The most impudent thing he even did was having a circular *printed* in this form—'Mr. William Hemming, being incessantly overwhelmed with applications for money on all sides, finds it necessary positively to decline acceding to Mr. ——'s request.' And filling in each creditor's name in ink, he sent every one that dunned him one of the printed circulars."

"Did they stand it?"

"I suppose they were so utterly astounded with the novelty of the thing that they did not know what to do. I had the story from a bootmaker who showed me *his* copy of the circular, and he evidently was divided between an inclination to be angry and to burst out laughing. So for the sake of Master Will, I fostered the latter feeling, and the man of leather roared over his customer's strange epistle."

"That art of managing duns is certainly a wonderful one," said Fred. "I have often thought of it. The stories one hears of Sheridan and his creditors are mostly stupid enough as related, and we only wonder how the creditors could have been such asses. But there must have been something in the air and manner of the man quite irrespective of what he said, or did, that charmed the blockheads, as serpents charm birds, for in they plunged to the trap wherever he chose to set it. I have no doubt that precisely the same qualities of mind form the accomplished diplomatist, and the accomplished 'do,' as the present phrase is."

"Both must understand human nature well," said Lorimer.

"Yes; but many men understand it, and yet don't manage it well. A man may have an excellent scientific knowledge of billiards, but if he has not also a perfect mechanical command of his cue and a correct eye, he won't be a good player. Philosophers in their study often understand human nature thoroughly—they show it by their works—but they cannot deal with it as cleverly as men of the world in actual practice; though the latter may have much less real knowledge of the human heart."

"A diplomatist should have the knowledge and the skill too," said Lorimer.

"Exactly so—and so should a 'do.' By the way, I don't like this new word, but there's no other that exactly expresses my meaning. A swindler is a coarser, lower animal, altogether—in fact, he is generally a bit of an ass, because the risks he runs are too large in proportion to the possible gains. He cheats, makes false pretences, assumes other men's names and occasionally their handwriting, and without ever being in good society often ends in Newgate or Van Diemen's Land. But a 'do' is a superior animal, he has tact and wit, and some sort of honor, if not honesty. He never pretends to what he *has* not, or *is* not; but produces such a general effect on the weak minds of tailors, &c. &c., that they *fancy* him the man of fashion, fortune, and rank, and trust him of their own free-will. Nay, even when they find there is no fortune, and very little rank, they trust him for fashion's sake, and for fear of his doing them an injury with their other 'clients, as *my* tailor always call his customers. Such is the modern 'do.' I need not point you to the *men* themselves, because we both know their names, and they are sounded in almost every drawing-room in London."

"I suppose very much the same sort of thing is going on here in Paris?" said Lorimer.

"No doubt; but I fancy there are more swindlers and fewer 'do's,' than in our own metropolis. Frenchmen always want to blaze too much; they cannot be quiet either in dress or equipage."

"It's strange that Frenchmen should dress in such bad taste," said Lorimer, "and Frenchwomen so completely the reverse."

"So it is; but is it not fortunate that the French ladies do dress in such good taste! for are they not horribly plain? Do you know that I verily believe the only thing that ever takes me back from Paris that I love so, to London that I hate so, is

the intense desire I feel to see a few pretty women again—an unattainable luxury here."

Lorimer laughed.

"Well, then," said he, "do you feel any of that desire at the present moment? because I am returning to England immediately."

"So soon?"

"Yes. My dear fellow, you know my position, I have to make a living—and God knows how I am to set about it; but at least, *I* know that I ought to begin at once."

Fred Stanley was silent for a moment, and then said, suddenly:

"I tell you what, Littlegood—I'll be hanged if I don't go with you; shall we start to-morrow?"

"With pleasure," answered Lorimer, quite amused at his friend's impetuosity.

"Then, let's go and tell Jack Fenton—he'll be very sorry, I know, because he has taken a great fancy to you."

Lorimer said nothing, but wondered at his friend's words. Could it be really true that the man against whom he was almost unconsciously cherishing ill-feeling, entertained the very opposite sentiments towards himself? Certainly Jack Fenton was a very good fellow, a very pleasant fellow, and a most hospitable fellow, he had behaved with the utmost kindness and cordiality to Lorimer, and yet the latter could not like him, as he felt he ought. To be sure, whenever he saw Jack Fenton, or whenever that individual was named, he always thought of Miss Stanley and Miss Stanley's partiality for Mr. Fenton. And this may account for Lorimer's feeling: it was very wrong, but rather natural too.

Fred Stanley was right in his prophecy. Fenton was sincerely sorry to lose his friends, vowed they should not go, and gave them a hundred unanswerable reasons why they positively must remain. But it was to no purpose, for they were resolved.

"What will Miss Stanley say of your desertion of her?" said Fenton.

"Her brother must answer for himself," said Lorimer; "my presence can be of very little service to Miss Stanley."

"I'm not sure of that," said Fenton, and with a look towards Lorimer alone, which seemed to mean much.

"She'll miss Littlegood a great deal more than myself," cried Fred: "For he's such a good-natured fellow, and goes to places that I hate, and, in fact, does my duties for me."

"Mr. Fenton will be happy to supply my place, I am sure," said Lorimer.

"Happy, undoubtedly," replied Fenton, "but not competent to fill it with equal satisfaction to the ladies."

The words sounded like a mere compliment; but the look towards Lorimer, and evidently meant for him alone, express much more.

"Confound the fellow's impudence," muttered Lorimer; "he knows that he has won the prize, and he sports with the loser."

However, he made no reply. In the afternoon they called and took leave of Mrs. and Miss Stanley; and certainly if the latter felt any great sorrow at the parting, she concealed it admirably under a show of perfect indifference. Lorimer was more than ever convinced that he was as nothing to her. Unluckily he was equally satisfied that she was as everything to him. So it always is in love and everything else,—we covet most what we seem to have least chance of obtaining.

Next morning Fred and Lorimer were again in the train and hastening back to England.

"Where do you intend to go when we reach our dear foggy land?" asked Fred.

"Straight to my mother's house," answered Lorimer. "I am very anxious just now to see my sister. Will you accompany me?"

"Indeed I will. Do you know, Littlegood, I'm glad you

asked me, because otherwise I should have been obliged to be guilty of the rudeness of asking you to take me."

"I'm delighted to hear it," answered Lorimer, who was becoming more and more attached to the volatile Fred.

"I think I had better confess the truth at once," continued the latter, "because I feel like a deceitful humbug at the present moment. I made up my mind to start for England on purpose to be introduced to your sister."

"To my sister?" exclaimed Lorimer, in surprise.

"Yes; to your sister. I have the strongest wish to see her after all that I have heard of her from you."

"I don't think I have talked much about her, have I?" asked Lorimer.

"Yes, you have: but that's the beauty of it. You don't know that you have spoken much of her, because you don't *intend* to do so. You don't set to work to give us descriptions of her appearance, or her sayings and doings; but you constantly, and unconsciously refer to her, and always in a way that shows me you love her very much."

"I do, God bless her!" exclaimed Lorimer; "but surely that's nothing extraordinary. Don't most men love their own sisters?"

"No; at least, not much. They have of course a little, or a good deal, of the ordinary domestic attachment for them; but few sisters take the trouble to make their brothers love them very warmly; and I suppose few brothers deserve that they should."

"What a cynic you are, Stanley!" said Lorimer, laughing.

"Not a bit, but I hate humbug, and upon my soul there's a very little else left in the world."

Meanwhile, Jessie, the subject of Mr. Frederick Stanley's curiosity, had no idea of the visit in store for her. She expected Lorimer to return to England soon, but he had not written to fix any day for doing so. And so she merely hoped that each succeeding day would bring him, for not only was

further time spent in Paris, time lost to him, but, moreover, she felt that the longer he remained near Miss Stanley, the greater would be his sufferings of disappointed affection.

It was a beautiful evening in June. The garden of the cottage looked so fresh, so neat, and withal, so tastefully cared for, that few could have passed the gate without peeping to get such a view as the envious evergreens would allow them.

"What a sweet place!" cried Stanley.

"I think so now, though I well remember when I was only too glad to get away from it," answered Lorimer.

The two friends were on foot, followed by two lads carrying their portmanteaus. They preferred to approach the house thus, rather than in a fly, so as to come upon the inmates by surprise. Lorimer opened the gate and led his friend to the house; here he again opened the door, and passed at once to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Littlegood was sitting alone. She sprang up to embrace her son. Lorimer then introduced his friend, who found instant favor in the good lady's eyes.

"Where's Jessie?" asked Lorimer.

"She's in the schoolroom," answered his mother.

"What! not done work yet?"

"She's only giving a dancing lesson to a pet pupil of hers who is not very clever in learning to dance."

"I'll go to her," said Lorimer.

He was leaving the room, and suddenly stopped.

"Stanley, come with me, will you?" he cried.

"Oh, no, my dear Lorimer!" exclaimed his mother, quite shocked at the proposal.

"Why not? Stanley won't quiz, will you?"

"Indeed not, but is it fair to Miss Littlegood?"

"Certainly not," cried Mrs. Littlegood.

"Nonsense," answered Lorimer. "I know Jessie well enough. She won't be amazed at all, it will be a good bit of

fun ; and " he added, as he led Fred Stanley along, " you will at least see her without disguise, for the first time."

The friends proceeded cautiously to the school-room door, which, fortunately for their plot, was ajar. They peeped in.

A little girl was standing in the middle of the room awkwardly attempting her "first step;" opposite to her stood Jessie Littlegood, lifting up her dress to show the step, and displaying thereby as pretty a foot and ankle as mortal might wish to look upon. She was humming a little air to mark the time ; her face was smiling ; her eye full of animation and excitement ; her cheek slightly flushed. To Fred Stanley it was a vision of loveliness he had not expected to behold.

" Bravo !" cried Lorimer.

Jessie started, recognized her brother's voice, and rushed to throw herself into his arms. But there was a stranger ! and she almost uttered a cry of alarm ; at all events she blushed deeply and stopped short.

" Don't be alarmed, my dear Jessie," cried Lorimer, kissing her, " this gentleman is a very good friend of mine, most anxious to make your acquaintance—Mr. Frederick Stanley."

Jessie was startled at the name, but bowed and led the way back to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XL.

MOTHER SHADDLES.

MOTHER Shaddles did not lose much time in determining what to do, her simulated ignorance, deafness, and decrepitude, had put Weazel off his guard, and enabled her to become acquainted with his various schemes and plots—she felt sure the abstracted document, and some circumstances known to herself alone were sufficient not only to convict her late master, whom she thoroughly detested, of a criminal offence, but also to dispose of the property, unwillingly possessed by poor little Rose, in a way little expected by any of the parties interested in Weazel's machinations.

From her knowledge of the man, she had little difficulty in determining, as soon as anger permitted her to think rationally, that Falcon's approaching visit—for she had listened to his conversation with Weazel—was the reason of the sudden departure of the latter, nor did she question, having arrived at this conclusion, that Weazel's first step would be directed towards destroying the means by which his fraud could be unmasked, and this pointed in her mind clearly to a visit to our friend Crank, at Stumpington.

Mother Shaddles was no ordinary woman, she was fond of money, and she delighted in mischief, but these were characteristics acquired rather by the most bitter experience of life, than inherent in her nature, little as her outward appearance and present character might seem to indicate it; she had once been good-looking, affectionate, and honest, her passions had

been always strong, and their intensity had much to do in making her what she was, but man's perfidy and cruelty were quite as much to blame—in spite of all, and perverted, as her nature had become, she yet cherished sentiments of a better kind. In the midst of the most abject poverty, she remained honest, and her hatred of Weazel was in the first instance quite as much the result of the discovering his villainy as resenting his insults; before entering his service, which the direst necessity had rendered a matter of the utmost importance, she ascertained his disposition, and her knowledge of the world told her, that every mental and bodily defect, so long as she seemed capable of doing what he required, would be a recommendation in his eyes; Weazel was therefore completely deceived, and believing that he had nothing to fear from her, he was less reserved and guarded than was usual with him, hence she accidentally became acquainted with circumstances which excited her curiosity, and this once roused, she lost no opportunity of discovering more. Soon however other feelings were excited, she found that Weazel's schemes were calculated to inflict injuries on innocent parties, she detested the dishonesty of the man, and therefore determined sooner or later to frustrate his designs, and be the means of undoing the mischief he had caused; but what was her surprise, and how ardently did she enter upon the work, when she ascertained that those who had been deprived of their property were themselves not entitled to it, and that they had acquired it to the injury of parties once most dear to her, and the recollection of whom awakened memories and feelings, which she had thought very long dead: she therefore determined to see her friends or their descendants righted, and hoped by that means to atone in some measure for acts of her own which had often weighed heavily on her conscience. Although her aim was noble, Mother Shaddles had become too much habituated to her present mode of thought and action, to do things as other people would have done them; mystery had become a passion with her, and she

determined to do things in her own way and at her own time, without revealing herself, or her plans to those most interested in her proceedings.

While thus considering the various circumstances in connection with her self-imposed task, she continued hobbling on her way, as fast as she was able, indulging every now and then in parenthetical invectives, and prognostications, about our friend Weazel, which would have given one the impression that hatred and mischief were her ruling passions; at last however she roused herself to inquire where she could obtain temporary shelter and the necessary means for a journey to Stumpington; she could not see her way clear to accomplish the last in any other way than by walking the whole distance, from which she by no means shrunk, and the first she hoped to find under the poor but hospitable roof of the Pecks—nor was she disappointed. These honest people received her kindly and were much surprised to hear of the flight of Weazel, but Peck's suspicions having been roused, as to the honesty of Weazel's conduct in the Littlegood affair, he with the aid of his more active little wife found no difficulty in at last arriving at the conviction, “that that affair” had something to do with Weazel's flight.

Seeing that Mother Shaddles expressed herself in no very friendly terms about her late employer, and that she was evidently meditating some mischief against him, Mr. Peck informed her of Peg Tod's present abode and of his suspicions, that she knew something which might prove the means of bringing Weazel's guilt home to him.

Mrs. Shaddles perceived that the indignation of the Pecks, arose rather out of sympathy for Littlegood, than for any very delicate sense of right; she, therefore, said nothing about her ulterior aims, and allowing them to think that her endeavors must result beneficially to Lorimer, she availed herself of Peck's offer to take her to Stumpington and to lend her a “couple of sovereigns” for expenses while remaining in the country.

Mr. Crank was a gentleman of a too philosophic turn of mind, to trouble himself much about the affairs of others; Mother Shaddles did not therefore succeed in enlisting his sympathy, and active co-operation for her designs against Weazel; he was ready to communicate all he knew, and very probably the parish books had been tampered with, but "things would all come right" without his intervention.

Peg Tod was as much afraid of Weazel as ever; it was therefore with the utmost difficulty that she could be induced to state what she had observed and to produce the strip of paper she had picked up from the floor.

Having obtained all the information she required, Mother Shaddles had made up her mind to return to town. The day previous to her intended departure was one of festivity with the Cranks who were about giving a tea party in honor of the birthday of Mr. Crank. The humble parlor was made tidy, and carefully arranged in Mrs. Crank's best manner, and Mrs. Shaddles was invited to honor them with her company. A lamp was burning on the table, the tea pot was smoking, and the little party were just entering with spirit upon the enjoyments of tea and muffins, when they were alarmed by the door being burst open violently, and Peg Tod rushing in alarm into the room screaming, "don't let him take me away with him—he will kill me." Meantime the consternation had been great and the excitement was still further increased by the frightful screams of Master Bobby Crank, who had received the scalding contents of Mother Shaddles' tea cup over his head and face. The old lady was the first to recover—understanding the cause of Peg's fears, she rose quickly from her seat and enjoining Crank not to say anything about their presence, or his suspicions to Weazel, drew Peg with her into the inner room.

Scarcely had they disappeared, when Weazel entered, not a little surprised at the general excitement which seemed to prevail in the apartment; he looked careworn and anxious, and evidently disappointed to find that he could not converse upon

the business which brought him there that evening ; he therefore very soon took his departure, making an appointment to call upon Mr. Crank the following afternoon.

As soon as Weazel had left the house, Mother Shaddles hobbled into the parlor and asking Mrs. Crank's permission to take Peg Tod with her, they both left the house.

The nature of their errand may be inferred from the fact, that while Mr. Weazel was in the act of explaining to Mr. Crank, who was finishing a pair of Clarendons with his usual devotion to his "last"—the interest he took in parish documents, and especially those relating to Stumpington, and how he would like to have these interesting volumes intrusted to him for perusal at his leisure during his stay at Stumpington, he was tapped on the shoulder by a detective policeman, (in plain clothes) while Mother Shaddles pointed at him—gibbering with delight. "I said I should hang him, there he is, caught at last, poor little man, what shall we all come to, God bless us all!"

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CONSPIRACY.

WEAZEL was charged with forging a copy of a marriage certificate, and abstracting a leaf out of the parish register of Stumpington.

The missing leaf was in the possession of Mother Shaddles, and was the paper she had taken from Weazel's desk: it corresponded with the vacant place in the parish book, but had no entry like that on the paper, which had been filed in court, as the marriage certificate of Bennoch's father.

Weazel had kept this document, in case he might at any time have found it desirable, to "put the screw" on Bill Bennoch, if that gentleman's natural liberality should not by any chance have come up to Mr. Weazel's notions of right. Bennoch's untimely death, the appointment of Falcon as trustee, and the position which that acute practitioner was able to assume in opposition to him, had disconcerted his plans, but he only submitted for a time, in order the more surely to carry out his originally conceived plans, and his journey to Stumpington was undertaken with a view to place matters so, that he might defy charges like those brought against him by Falcon, and yet preserve the means of ultimately turning the tables upon him, and laying his purse under contribution: Weazel was ignorant of Falcon's exact intentions about Bennoch's property, but he had seen enough of him to feel sure, that that acute practitioner looked upon the property of the Bennochs as destined for his own use, and he therefore did not reason wrongly in believing that the fear of losing so valuable a prize

might be made a means of compelling Falcon to comply with any reasonable demand he might make upon him.

The disappointment of the little villain when he discovered the loss of the document he so much prized, the fear that its loss might compromise his personal safety, and his consternation when he found himself suddenly in the grasp of the law, can scarcely be described ; but as he was rather a physical than a moral coward, he soon recovered his presence of mind.

The magistrates remanded the case for fourteen days to get up further evidence. Meanwhile Weazel lost no time in communicating with Falcon, and asking him to come to Stumpington without a moment's delay : that gentleman arrived there accordingly the next evening. After a good deal of fencing on both sides, in which the lawyer always maintained the upper hand, these two worthies came to an understanding. Fortunately for Weazel he had travelled under an assumed name ; his trunk, therefore, containing his desk, in which there was a very considerable sum of money and most important papers, affecting both his personal safety and the interests of the chief personages of this story, as well as of some individuals not so intimately known to the reader, did not fall into the hands of the police. It was agreed between the two parties, that Falcon was to take possession of the trunk and its contents, and retain the whole of the papers and half the money for his services in Weazel's defence. These conditions were hard and not easily conceded by him, but he had no alternative—he had no one to whom he could have intrusted his case, so likely to obtain his release as Falcon, and he was obliged to confide his property to him, if he would not have it fall into the hands of the law. The work to be done, in order to get him released, was no ordinary matter—but Falcon was no ordinary man—and the prize at stake, apart from the very handsome reward he obtained, out of Weazel's immediately available means, was sufficient to call forth all his ingenuity and to override all his scruples. Having obtained the address of the inn in the

town, where Weazel first stayed after leaving London, and where he had left his trunk in charge of the landlord, Falcon went, took possession of it, and immediately returned to town. An examination of the contents of the desk confirmed all Weazel's statements, and showed him, not only that Rose Bennoch had no claims to the property, but that Littlegood was also not entitled to it. It also furnished a pretty accurate insight into the proceedings of Mr. Bosher and Littlegood's grandfather, and of some other matters, from which Falcon promised himself both profit and the gratification of his enmity to Lorimer.

Mr. Falcon also hoped to turn his present knowledge to advantage with Rose, and at any rate he would be able, in case she should refuse compliance with his wishes, to deprive her of all her property, and to compensate himself for the loss of so good a client, by most probably becoming the solicitor of those who, in default of Bennoch's legitimacy and Littlegood's rights, would be the heirs to old Bennoch's estate. Who these were he did not know, but with the clue in his possession he soon hoped to find out. Mr. Falcon did not, however, for a moment doubt his success with poor little Rose ; his last interview with her had revealed to him traits in her character of whose existence he had not had the least conception ; he therefore felt sure that the loss of her property would have no terrors for her ; he also saw that no amount of personal devotion would ever succeed in engaging her affections, and, he doubted not, that her sense of right would induce her at once to renounce wealth which she already regarded with dislike, as obtained at the cost of the person, who was the first that had acted kindly towards her.

It is strange, but it is nevertheless a fact, that very bad men are very apt to love in woman the very attributes in which they themselves are deficient. It was thus with Falcon ; the insight which he had lately obtained of the character of Rose made her possession a matter of greater importance to him,

and what he had at first coveted only on account of pecuniary considerations, became now a matter of feeling with him. The sentiments involved were indeed peculiarly Falconian, but there was nevertheless some amount of absolute love mixed up with them : his pride was hurt at her continued apathy towards him, after so much labor and so many efforts had been expended in endeavoring to make himself agreeable : his envy was roused at the knowledge that another rivalled him successfully, though involuntarily, in the young lady's affections, his cupidity was excited at the possession of a handsome fortune, and his intercourse with Rose had awakened in him a feeling as kindred to affection as was compatible with his character : no doubt if the course were traced, it would be found that his sentiments grew in an inverse ratio to the usual process. He noticed Rose for her wealth and expectations ; he looked upon her therefore as marked out for him, and he felt a species of love towards her because she was his ; nevertheless, she had become not indifferent to him, and since he had found her possessed of active virtues, of temper, firmness and passion, where her feelings were interested, she had become more attractive in his eyes, and this was an additional stimulant to spur him on to make Rose Bennoch his own.

A mind so fertile and unscrupulous as Falcon's, did not find much difficulty in discovering a method by which Rose Bennoch could be made to submit to his wishes. He was now fully convinced that Rose loved Lorimer Littlegood ; he saw that womanly delicacy and the circumstances in which she was placed would compel her ever to keep these feelings a secret, but this made the sentiment which prompted her to wish to return him his property all the more intense—this was the only way in which she could show her gratitude—her affection—towards him ; hence the wish to reinstate her first friend, in what she believed was rightly his ; the desire to undo what she deemed a great crime, and the greatest act of ingratitude, had become the ruling object of her life, an all engrossing

passion, and this all the more because she believed herself degraded, and felt herself humiliated in the eyes of the only man whose good opinion was dearer to her than life, until she was able to show him that she, at least, had been no party to depriving him of his fortune.

Falcon's plan was therefore to avail himself of Rose's master passion, and convert that into the means of obtaining her hand ; though devoid of all sentimentality himself, he was able to appreciate the depth of her devotion, and he did not fail to perceive that such devotion, under the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed, with a mind untrained to think logically, unaccustomed to reason upon her own feelings, and unassisted by maternal counsel, might be made to look upon marriage with a man whom she did not love, as an act of self-sacrifice highly commendable, if done from motives of honor and gratitude, and for the happiness of him who possessed her heart. That this victory, if such it may be called, provided he succeeded in making Rose Bennoch his wife, would not secure him her affection, and was incompatible with self-respect, in as much as it made him knowingly marry a woman who loved another, did not trouble Mr. Falcon very much ; he wished to have Rose as a wife, and the gratification of his desire was in itself enough for him—he hoped to make her love him ultimately, and if not—love was, in his mind, no indispensable requisite of the married state—if she loved him, it would be well for herself—if otherwise, she would be the greatest sufferer ; he would know how to compensate himself, in the possession of fortune, for the want of affection.

Having settled these matters to his own satisfaction, he proceeded to take the necessary measures for preventing the conviction of Weazel.

On the morning when Weazel was to have been brought up for further examination, the Cranks discovered that Peg Tod had absconded in the night, taking her few articles of clothing with her. When Weazel was brought up before the Magistrates,

Mr. Falcon produced an eminent professional man from London, to prove that the leaf which was stated to have been torn out of the parish register, was a skilful forgery ; such was indeed the case, from various internal marks, and this was further confirmed, by the testimony of several parties who corroborated the authenticity of the copy of certificates, which had been presented to the court, in the matter of " Bennoch v. Littlegood." Mother Shaddles protested that the paper, now in the hands of the Magistrates, was not the one she had given them, that it must have by some means been abstracted from the documents and another substituted, and that Peg Tod could not only prove that she had seen Weazel forge the certificate, but also produce one of the identical slips of paper, on which he had experimented until he succeeded in producing an instrument which would pass for authentic ; she also mentioned the fact of Weazel's sudden departure as indicative of his wishing to escape from the possible discovery of his crime.

All these charges had been anticipated, and provided against by Mr. Falcon. The Justices in whose possession the document was, of course repudiated the possibility of any substitution ; moreover it appeared in every respect the same, and although able, now that it was pointed out to them, to see that it was fictitious, it appeared at first sight sufficiently real, to warrant their remanding Weazel.—What Peg Tod might have proved, could not be known,—it was in her power to have been there, and as she chose to absent herself, it was only fair to presume she had nothing to say, and had good reasons for doing what she had done. In relation to the furniture, Mr. Maple was there to prove, that he had only agreed to take care of them for a certain time, and a " highly respectable tradesman" came forward and stated, that he had entered into arrangements with Mr. Weazel, to attend to some affairs of his in the north of England.

Under these circumstances Weazel was discharged, and Mother Shaddles given into custody, for endeavoring by means

of a fictitious document maliciously to injure her late employer, and she was committed for trial at the ensuing assizes ; the evidence of Maple and his man, as well as of the policeman who had taken Weazel into custody, went to prove her malicious intent in threatening to have him hanged ; her appearance—the absence of any one to speak favorably of her character—and the vagrant life she had led before she entered Weazel's service, as well as the evident spuriousness of the document on which she had made her charges against her late employer, all went to condemn her, and she was accordingly sentenced to be imprisoned for twelve months. She persisted to the last, that she was the victim of a vile conspiracy, which she would unmask sooner or later—mean time she had fortunately not divulged anything about her knowledge, in relation to the real claimants of Bennoch's property, which enabled her at a later period to proceed with her plans, without Falcon's suspecting it.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN WHICH OUR STORY IS BROUGHT TO A CLOSE.

In his subsequent interviews with Rose, Falcon pretended to admire her sentiments, and fully to enter into her feelings ; as regards the restitution of Lorimer's property, he had taken care to make himself previously acquainted with Lorimer's disposition, and he rightly concluded, that that young gentleman's really generous, and upright disposition, marred though it was by indolence, and fondness of pleasure, would not permit him to accept anything as a gift, to which he was not legally entitled ; keeping this opinion however to himself, he fostered the generous impulse in the mind of his young victim, expatiated on the want of gratitude she would exhibit if she did not avail herself of the first possible opportunity to do what her heart told was her imperative duty, and displayed so much sympathy and generosity of feeling, that Rose reproached herself, for the suspicion with which she had viewed, and the coldness with which she had treated him. Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, his sentiments seemed to have merged from sympathy with her desires, to admiration for her virtues, and devotion to herself ; in exhibiting this growing affection, he acted so delicately—so unobtrusively—so different to his ordinary manner—that even the most refined sensitiveness could not have been offended, and even callousness must have felt some sorrow, that it had not the power to reward such apparently unselfish affection.

Two objects were thus gained at the same time : the determination to sacrifice herself if necessary for the benefit of Lori-

mer, was strengthened until it amounted to an overruling passion, while a tender, compassionating friendship was awakened towards Falcon. During the progress of this piece of hypocrisy, no opportunity was lost to speak of Lorimer's painful position, of his struggles, real or imaginary, his difficulties and his disappointments, of what he is, and might have become, but for the loss of fortune; he had continual occasion to narrate something about him, which rendered it a source of the deepest regret to Rose, that she wanted the power necessary to place him again in an independent position; and when Falcon one day, with a depth of sentiment which she could not have supposed him capable of possessing, narrated a false tale of sorrow—how Lorimer loved—and was loved in return by Miss Stanley—but had been refused her hand, on account of his poverty—how he was almost heart-broken—and had determined as a last resort to go to the coast of Africa—and either make a fortune, which would enable him to obtain his heart's treasure, or never return again to his native land, Rose gave way to despair. Though she loved Lorimer to distraction, hers was an affection which expected no return—which could have sacrificed all, to render its object happy—and feeling that her family had been the cause of his misfortunes, she could support her misery no longer, and falling to the feet of Falcon, she entreated him to help her to do that, on which her peace of mind, her very life depended. This was the opportunity sought—the moment waited for. His business was lucrative, but his expenditure had been equal to his income; if in his power, she might command his last penny—but alas—the means and not his will were wanting—one way and only one remained; in taking this step she would make two men happy, and bring peace to her own mind—he would never have ventured to ask her hand, and would have been contented to be allowed to worship in sorrow, at a distance, and in secret, but her happiness was dearer to him even than the fear of being banished from her sight, and if she refused his prayer, he would

at least have the consolation of knowing, that he had done all in his power to save her from self-reproach: Lorimer loved another, she could never hope to have her love returned; in giving her hand therefore to him, she was breaking no ties nor acting falsely to herself; she was doing the only thing by which she could make Lorimer happy—for if she married Falcon, he would immediately take the necessary measures for transferring her fortune to Lorimer—its rightful owner—and surely it could be no argument against his prayer, if he alluded to his disinterestedness in loving her for herself, in agreeing to part with all she had to him she loved, and if she were assured that while doing her duty and acting nobly—generously—she at the same time rendered one to whom she was dearer than all else, supremely blest.—Poor little Rose! how could she withstand this? how could she escape this web of sophistry and hypocrisy—how cope against an enemy—who knowing her weakness and appreciating her devotion, used both as a means of serving his ends?—she consented—she became Falcon's wife.

* * * * *

The reader need not be informed, that treachery was beneath all the professions and promises of Falcon—and that he never intended to keep his word as regards returning his wife's fortune to Lorimer; but as he loved her as well as he was capable of loving anything, he wished if possible not to lose her good opinion, by openly violating his pledge, on the strength of which she gave him her hand, without marriage settlement or other security. He therefore called upon Lorimer the first time he came to town, and informed him, that his wife, intensely grateful to him for his kindness towards her when she was a poor and neglected child, felt excessively miserable that her family should have deprived him of what he had been led to believe was his birthright, and although conscious that it was rightly her due, she felt unhappy at being enriched at his expense, and had therefore exacted a pledge from him, prior to their marriage, to return to Lorimer the fortune she possessed

—this promise he was now ready to fulfill, from affection to his wife, and regard to his word, although he could not but feel, that she was giving way to a mistaken generosity and a false notion of honor, considering that neither Lorimer or his father and grandfather were ever entitled to the property, of which her father had been unjustly deprived for so many years, to the injury, morally, mentally and physically, of himself and family. Lorimer, as might be expected, refused to avail himself of Mr. Falcon's generosity, although he felt deeply moved by it; and at the request of Falcon, he wrote her a letter stating the reasons, why he could not honorably avail himself of her generous offer, thanking her for her good intentions, and assuring her that he had now come to consider the loss of fortune by no means so great a disaster as he at first thought, and doubted not that, with the experience he had obtained, and stimulated by the necessity for exertion, not only on his own account, but also for the sake of one whom he dearly loved and to whom he had reason to believe, he was not indifferent—he would succeed in carving out a career for himself, tending more to his happiness and being more useful to the world than the mere enjoyment of wealth, for which he had done nothing.

This was a most severe blow to poor Rose; the romantic aim which she had held out to herself, and which gave her strength to marry a man whom she did not love, had all proved a mere phantom; she was enriched at Lorimer's expense—and he was happy without her aid; there was no further exercise for the sentiments which she had cherished, and viewing her present position calmly, she felt that she had made a mistake; her husband was as yet kind and even affectionate, but the necessity for concealment being removed, she could not help seeing either that he had been playing a part, or that she had, under the influence of excitement, over estimated his qualities; she felt at the same time that repining was useless, and that it was her duty, since she had married, to endeavor to love her husband.

Had there been anything in common between them, and if Falcon were not aware of her love for another, she might have gradually learned to love him ; as it was, he, although fully confiding in her honor, doubted her affection, and, while not reproaching her, he was apt to construe every trivial inattention to that cause ; this widened the breach between them, and while their temperaments rendered petty quarrels impossible, there was that in their union which under adverse circumstance, was certain to lead to her unhappiness.

Lorimer had written to Rose, what was really true : he had seen enough of life--at least of one kind of life, to be thoroughly sick of it ; his regard for Miss Stanley, which ripened into sincere affection, when he found that Jack Fenton was only an intimate friend, had the effect of fixing his mind more earnestly, on the necessity of devoting himself to some profession, by means of which he might be able to support her, for he was too proud to be entirely dependent upon his wife for his fortune : therefore after being assured of her affection, he entered one of the inns of court, and postponed his marriage until he was called to the bar.

Fred Stanley made shorter work of it ; the impression made upon him by Jessie, when he first beheld her, was of a lasting kind ; he cultivated her acquaintance with his usual impetuosity and succeeded in gaining her love. They are now married, and under the influence of such a wife, and of the most perfect domestic happiness, he has become quite reconciled to English habits, and is now a staid respectable member of society. Mrs. Littlegood lives with her daughter, and enjoys her happiness with the same calmness that she did the misfortunes of bygone days. Mrs. Bennoch, although unable to comprehend the feelings of her daughter, sees that she is not happy—and frequently asks herself “What good has come of our riches ?”

THE END.

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